

Tourism Cafe DVXA Project Team:

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All photograph were taken during the community visit, except where cited.





Executive Summary

In September 2015, a Destination Visitor Experience Assessment (DVXA) was conducted in Tumbler Ridge. This report was contracted by the Economic Development Department of Tumbler Ridge to help identify opportunities to enhance the visitor experience and guide future training and investment opportunities.

What is a DVXA? It is an unbiased third party review of the visitor experience to assess the competitive appeal. It examines the physical and emotional touch-points a traveller experiences with tourism businesses and destination through the pre-trip information (online and print), engaging with the place, people, products, and services during the visit, and reflects on the post-trip memories.

In performing the assessment, our three-member team was allowed full latitude to explore the destination based on their pre-trip planning and choices made once in community based on in-person recommendations by other visitors, visitor information centres, and businesses. None of us had visited Tumbler Ridge, nor a Global Geopark prior to this assessment.

Like any traveller, we had a **pre-trip experience** that influenced our decisions, what we did, where we went and why. This was informed by:

- · Online research;
- Print materials;
- Visitor Information Centres; and
- · Word of mouth recommendations enroute and once in town.

During the journey the visitor experience was impacted by the:

- Journey to and from Tumbler Ridge;
- Feeling upon arrival relative to the welcome, signage, ease of getting around;
- Town itself, its recreational facilities, downtown area, the retail and shopping opportunities;
- Attractions and opportunities to engage, connect, discover and enjoy the Town of Tumbler Ridge and Global Geopark; and
- Accommodations (fixed roof, camping and RV), food and beverage.

Post-trip memories of our experience and things we will talk about are influenced by the:

- Service, hospitality, and emotional connections we made with the people, place, culture, and stories;
- · Invitation to return; and
- Perception vs. reality: Did the Tumbler Ridge Geopark deliver on the brand promise?



Key Discoveries : A Small Town with A Big Opportunity

Like any destination and business, there are excellent activities going on, elements to be tweaked, and areas where significant improvement is required to prepare the businesses to welcome the world and grow tourism beyond the local and regional market.

It is our hope the details contained within this report become a springboard for discussion, reflection and targeted action.

Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, for the right visitors, has the potential to become an iconic attraction. It is one of British Columbia's best kept secrets, and as traveller types that could be defined as 'your ideal' guests we will rave about the beauty, people, place, and visitor opportunities.

The hope for tourism to grow was evident in talking to people, given the closure of the major mines. The visitor experience however at this point is raw and needs development if the direct and indirect benefits from tourism are to be optimized and an increasingly diverse base of visitors is encouraged to travel to Tumbler Ridge and discover Canada's second Global Geopark

We fully appreciate that parts of this report may push some sensitivity buttons which we respect and understand. The goal however was to provide a foundation of information to help focus investment and build on the phenomenal opportunity ahead. Each visitor to your community will come with preconceptions, and have the Internet as their storyboard to permanently post their Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark experience, in print, video, images, and audio. Every incremental step forward, together, will contribute to the long-term future for tourism. Chapter 5 details the eight core findings which will contribute your success in being an iconic attraction in BC, and Canada as part of the Global Geopark network. In summary, these are:

- (1) Target investments in TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING carefully and purposefully;
- (2) Think about the VISITOR JOURNEY prepare them for what is and is not available;
- (3) Get Creative —ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE TO GENERATE NEW REVENUE AND DESTINATION APPEAL;
- (4) Improve the SENSE OF PLACE upon arrival and departure and invest in community WAY FINDING;
- (5) SIMPLIFY AND THE REMOVE CONFUSION with the overwhelming amount of information available to visitors;
- (6) Develop a BRAND that optimizes the UNIQUE GEOPARK DESIGNATION and aligns with Destination British Columbia;
- (7) Develop the BRAND STORY that connects emotionally and DIFFERENTIATES YOU in the market-place; and
- (8) SET ACHIEVABLE TARGETS for growth that matches investments in growing sustainable capacity.

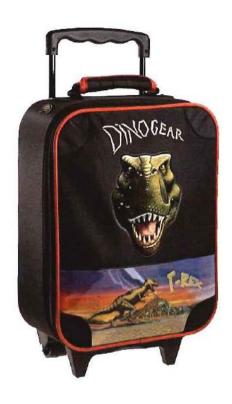
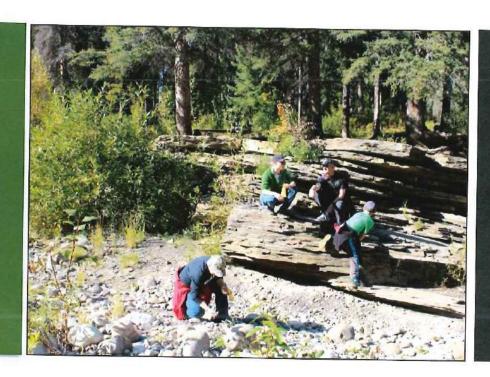


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1. A Destination Visitor Experience Assessment



"Seeing the sights is no longer enough. Experiential travellers want to venture beyond the beaten tourist paths and dive deeper into authentic, local culture, connecting with people from other cultures in deep and meaningful ways.

More than ever, people are travelling their passions!"

Joe Diaz, Co-founder Afar Magazine

In September of 2015, the Town of Tumbler Ridge, BC invested in a Destination Visitor Experience Assessment (DVXA) as part of their strategic tourism development and their recent UNESCO Global Geopark designation. The purpose of this report is to examine the community from the eyes of a traveller, then apply a professional lens to what is learned before, during, and after to identify tourism development opportunities for future investments.

1.1 What is a Destination Visitor Experience Assessment?

Figure 1: The Visitor Experience Lifecycle



A destination visitor experience assessment (DVXA) is an unbiased third party review of the visitor experience before, during, and after a visit to a community or region.

It looks at the physical and emotional touch-points a traveller experiences with a tourism business and destination as he/she moves through the stages of pre-trip considerations and purchase, engaging with the place, people, products, and services, plus their post-trip reflections and actions. (Figure 1) Together this influences loyalty, the potential for a long-term relationship, re-visitation, and referral.

The objective of the DVXA is to assess the competitive appeal and identify opportunities for investment to further enhance, differentiate, and diversify the visitor experience.

The outcome is to build on where a community is today, by identifying short-term tactics and long-term strategic opportunities that enable stakeholders that will benefit from increased tourism to holistically target investment that will:

- · Strengthen your brand with a compelling story;
- Increase visitor engagement;
- · Generate new revenue;
- · Improve the path-to-purchase;
- · Contribute to community pride; and
- Set the stage for visitors to share your stories based on their experience.

Colin Shaw and John Ivens (2007) Building Great Customer Experiences

[&]quot;A customer experience is an interaction between an organization and a customer. It is a blend of an organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, each intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contact."

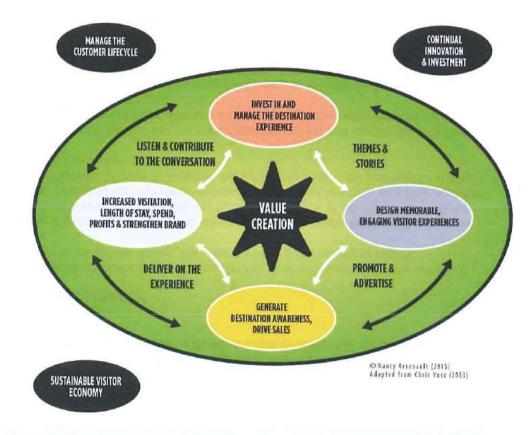
Important to the assessment is examining the community or destination from both a visitor's lens and a professional lens (Figure 2). The objective is to understand the appeal first as a visitor, then based on an online user-experience assessment and lived experience, apply a professional lens to develop recommendations and suggestions to invest in the destination. The goal is to reflect on the tourism investment cycle and determine the opportunities to increase value for the visitor, businesses, and the community (Figure 3).

Figure 2: The DVXA Lens



(2012) © tourismcafe.org

Figure 3: Tourism Investment Cycle



1.2 Why Is A DVXA Important?

Seeing the sights is no longer enough to grow and differentiate a business or destination.

We live in a world where travel options are rapidly increasing and the internet has opened the door for visitors to find what they want, when they want it. Consumers are in the driver's seat for travel planning through traditional means, via their computer or mobile devices, and often are better researched about their specific interests than a travel councillor could ever hope to be! Understanding the appeal of Tumbler Ridge and the newly designated Global Geopark is important because in a highly competitive tourism industry: the visitor experience matters!

In 1998, Joe Pine and James Gilmore authored the "Experience Economy" that provided the economic framework to help businesses understand the value of moving beyond commodities, goods and services, to layer on experiences as a way to differentiate and add value for their customers. The reason: When you create an emotional connection with visitors, it is harder for other businesses to break that bond.

Six years later the London School of Economics confirmed that: "Business strategies entered on the holistic design and delivery of total customer experiences consistently create superior value." Today, articles and examples abound that speak to generating value through memorable, engaging, and relevant customer experiences.

For smaller communities like Tumbler Ridge, this is particularly important. There are no accidental tourists in Tumbler Ridge; visitors have to choose to come to a community that is off the beaten track. It is not a place you happen to pass by and stop in. Visitors already on a journey travelling the Alaska highway or touring Northern British Columbia have to be inspired to include a detour south as part of their journey and know why this has value to them.

Working as a community within a region to define your unique, authentic value that contributes to amazing, captivating and enticing visitors is essential to inspiring people to 'Choose you'. Once they do, your responsibility is to deliver a memorable, integrated customer experience. The goal is to do this so well that you create the reasons to revisit, refer and rebook, but also you capture the hearts and emotions of guests so that when they leave they are inspired to tell the world. Your destination wins by receiving the untold value in earned storytelling by via the internet on Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, YouTube blogs, etc.

"Many Canadian companies choose to do business in the same markets they've operated in for years ... Working with familiar clients and markets is a comfortable option, and in the short-term, it may reduce risk ... but over the long term playing it safe can cause companies to lose their edge."

Deloitte (2013). Passport to Growth.



¹ Voss, C. (2003). The experience profit cycle: Trends in the experience and service economy. Retrieved from: http://www.researchgate.net/publication/242274223 Trends in the Experience and Service Economy The Experience Profit Cycle



1.3 Our Approach

The Assessment Team

As travellers all have different interests, and the tourism assets of Tumbler Ridge will appeal to certain types of travellers, the assessment team adopted a persona that represents one of the key traveller types, as defined by Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient research. This customer profile information is the foundation for insight being used by Destination BC, Travel Alberta and the Yukon - all entry points for guests to Tumbler Ridge².

Assessor #1: Cultural Explorer - Project Lead, Visitor Planning Community Visit and Market Material Review

"Sandra" began travelling as a child and never stopped, singing and dancing around the world, now in her 40s with teen age boys, she loves to find places for her family to visit that allows them to disconnect from technology and connect with interesting people and places. An avid traveller from the day she turned 18 years old and travelled the world for a year, she is always looking for authentic opportunities to connect with the locals and can spend hours listening to people talk about their home, what they do and why their community is so special.

Willing to try most anything, she loves a great meal, good bottle of wine, but is a vegetarian so has to select where to eat with some caution. Saskatchewan born, while she'll migrate to cultural activities — she loves hiking and being in nature — even better with a private guide or a small group!

Assessor #2: Free Spirit - Digital Audit

For a long time Gunter has been traveling to Canada for meeting related family import/export business. Typically this is in Toronto. He has only been to BC once and visited Vancouver and Whistler but had had a long time dream to see Northern BC. Having read about the discovery of Dinosaur tracks and the UNESCO Geopark he decided to explore the possibilities of adding on a trip to Northern BC. In his early 40s, Gunter is an extravert, extremely savvy on the Internet, books everything on line, and is always seeking that next 'WOW' experience to share with his friends. He also knows that a lot of Germans love the trails and wilderness of BC so thought he may even run into other Europeans who speak his language! His family is staying in Germany when he's on business, so for this trip he's an Independent traveller and one who is willing to spend money on things he enjoys.

Assessor #3: Authentic Experiencer - Visitor Planning and Community Visit

A semi-retired, francophone military officer, "François" is the family travel planner who usually has 2 or 3 vacations in the hopper. Always physically active, he is an avid golfer, swimmer (pool and lakes), hiker, road warrior, and has a black belt in Tae-kwon-do! He loves being in nature, away from the crowds and avoids travel that forces him into a box.

Not overly fussy about where he stays, brands aren't important to him, but he loves his creature comforts, internet wifi — his days of sleeping in a tent are over! An avid reader with an insatiable appetite to learn, he researchers his travel a lot on the Internet but rarely posts about his vacation, except a few pictures on Facebook. Any chance to connect with the locals and learn about what the area offers — he's in; especially if it is in a small group, quiet conversation — for as one of the millions of aging baby boomers, at 60 he has two hearing aids and can't handle noisy venues.

² Explorer Quotient research: An award-winning, proprietary tool that is changing the way travel experiences are developed, marketed and sold in Canada. http://explorer-quotient

Informing the Findings

Pre-Trip Research

The three-member team surfed the Internet to discover what interested them in Tumbler Ridge based on their motivation for visiting the area.

Each reviewer is free to use any digital or print information, callcentres or connecting with businesses. Once all three assessments were in, the information is shared and the travel itinerary put in place leaving room for change and influence when travelling.

This complete, a professional assessment of the digital userexperience and the print marketing materials, and the visitor information centres was made. These discoveries and observations are located in section 2.1.

Visiting Tumbler Ridge

Two of the three team members travelled to the community over the September long weekend.

Once in community they participated in a wide range of activities, intentionally changed accommodations every night and dined in different places to optimize their exposure to people and places in the community. Their discoveries and observations are located in section 2.2.



Prior to departing, a 1:1 meeting with the Economic Development Officer was held to share preliminary insights and delve into areas of tourism development of interest to the municipality and its stakeholders.

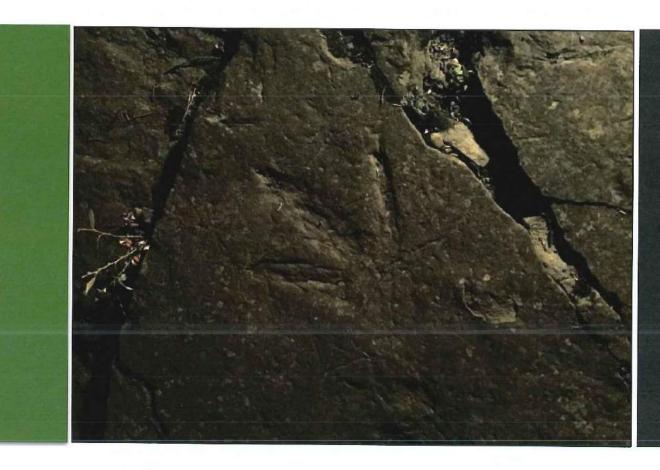
Post-Visit Engagement

Section 2.3 provides information on the post-visit experience³, and is reviewed relative to any contacts businesses (for those who have your contact information) be that a survey, thank you, or invitation to revisit.

³ Note: As this is a confidential review, no posting to TripAdvisor or other social media sites are made by the assessment team.



2.0 The Pre-Trip Experience: Discoveries and Suggestions



"The customer experience is a combination of everything you do, or you fail to do, that underpins any interactions with a customer or potential customer."

Kathy Haley, Vice President Client Experience Royal Bank of Canada The online visitor assessment is provided from two lens. First that of a traveller searching for information and their 'journey' in discovering Tumbler Ridge online (2.1.1). The value of this approach is to walk through how a user experiences your community online. While everyone is different, the story shared here resonated with all three team members and raises the question — how many others have the same user experience (UX)? Section 2.1.2 that follows it then a professional review of the digital presence. Feedback on the print materials is presented in section 2.1.3 followed by Visitor Information Centres in 2.1.4.

2.1 First Impressions from a Potential Visitor

NOTE TO THE READER: This section you are about to read is from the perspective of a German traveller interested in visiting British Columbia, the Global Geopark.

In the world of digital marketing it is known as a 'Persona Report' and provides insights regarding the online journey and user experience, relative to what the person is looking for. It is designed to share the first impressions of a visitor's journey, to help you begin to 'think like a traveller' as you develop your tourism potential.

Meet Gunther ... this is his story, his pre-trip experience. Will his online experience inspire the decision to visit? Read on and find out!



For a long time I've been traveling to Canada for business as my family has an import/export business. I am always visiting Toronto and have only been to BC once, to Vancouver and Whistler. It's been a long time dream to see Northern BC and I had heard about the discovery of Dinosaur tracks and the UNESCO Global Geopark designation in Tumbler Ridge so I went online to learn more at http://www.tumblerridge.ca/.

The first thing I want to find are pictures and videos because I'm German speaking and my English reading skills are not so great. I googled Tumbler Ridge and found the official website (www.tumblerridge.ca) right away. I clicked on the little camera icon that says *Photo of the day* on the bottom left of the homepage but it didn't open up into anything. Then I clicked on the top picture because I was so excited to see the skidoos. But it didn't open up. Then I tried clicking on *About* and saw there was a pretty good list of choices to click on but I chose to click on videos. I was disappointed as the first video I clicked on, *Lasting Impressions*, was pretty dated and I didn't watch more than half a minute. The other video, the *Welcome* one, had a few scenes of the landscape, which was what I was after, but no really useful information for me. Too bad, as I was really wanting to see some epic scenery.

Recent Video

All Time ¥



Tumbler Ridge - Lasting Impressions

Added: 6 years ago

From: SuperUser Account

Comments: 0 / Views: 1227



Tumbler Ridge - Welcome

Added: 6 years ago

From: SuperUser Account

Comments: o / Views: 1083

Dinosaurs

What I really wanted to find was information about the Dinosaurs. I looked under the *About, Your Adventure* dropdown menu, and didn't see Dinosaurs anywhere. But then I saw *Walk with the Dinosaurs* in the pictures at the top of the homepage and clicked on it and that seemed to work as it took me to a page of information about *Dinosaur Footprint tours*.

There seems to be two websites to look at — the Tumbler one but also the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre http://www.prprc.com/that seems to be an actually a research site? Not sure that palaeontology means anything to me as a tourist unless there are behind-the-scene tours or a chance to interact with the scientists. I didn't see any tours or packages.

The image of a dinosaur caught my eye at the top of the page that said *Walk with the Dinosaurs*. Very cool! Actually, I did not know this was available in this region so I was very excited to find out more. I think the *Evening Lantern Dinosaur Tour* sounds pretty great but I was really hoping to see a video or a slideshow of photos — something to give me a sense of the 'real' experience. The photos that are on the page also have kids and so I wondered if maybe this is not for adults? It's hard to get a sense of what the tour is like and who it's for. How do you see these things in the dark? I wondered. I read the pdf's but since my English isn't so great it was a bit difficult for me to understand a lot. And this site was definitely beyond me: http://www.prprc.com/. I see at the top of the Tumbler Ridge dinosaur page there is a phone number, but no long distance or 1-800 number for international callers and no email? Strange. Maybe they only want locals or Canadians?

Northern Dino Tour

Visit the land of the dinosaurs on this self-drive tour that takes you on an up-close exploration of the fascinating areas of discovery in the Peace Region of British Columbia: Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Hudson's Hope, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie, Alberta. Visit interpretive displays, trackways, museums, power dams and much more.

Ask at the Visitor Centre for the informative Northern Dino Tour brochure,

Since I am driving, I was interested in the Driving Tour but guess I have to find the visitor centre to get directions? Seems a little complicated and I'm not sure how long that would take or how close these towns are together. As an international tourist, I'm of course curious about directions but I have Google to rely, but I did appreciate the mileage calculator!

I was thinking of visiting in September, or as a second choice coming in late October, so I was curious about 'winter activities' time. I am most keen to snowmobile. I clicked on the <u>snowmobile tab</u> under *Winter Activities* and wow, there is a lot of information here. I'm wondering for a first-time visitor what the best routes are? I see if I have some questions I need to call long-distance or email? Where do I book? This makes me wonder, are they prepared for a visitor like me?

At the top of the Tumbler Ridge homepage there was a link called Grizfest http://www.grizfest.com/. It is a music festival that has already happened unfortunately. Maybe they only have one? Outdated websites worry me. If I'm going to travel that far, I want to know what's happening in the future, not the past.

Next, I looked into 'Your Adventure' because this seems more personal but this page does not have much information though I did click on 'Hiking' to see what they have because this is something I do quite often in Germany. There is so much information on this page that I simply had to copy and get it translated. And these pictures-so small! Hard to see and why are there no videos? These would help someone who is not so English speaking out a great deal!

So, I went to see where to <u>stay</u>. There seem to be only three options for hotels and under the Bed and Breakfast option the link just took me to a page that is under construction.



Where to eat was also under Where to stay but I don't know these places like Subway so would be great if this place can have some pictures for visitors like when there's no links or things like that.

In the eat section, it has *Take-out / Snacks* which features two gas stations? I am not sure this is where I would want to find food? Or maybe the gas stations can be under mileage?

So, I clicked around to see what else I can find and came to the Heritage and History page. Whoah! So much text. I just went straight to the link at the bottom <u>Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation</u>. This is a pretty amazing site; I wonder why it wasn't promoted anywhere else on the site (that I could find)? This is a very helpful site (much more so than the Tumbler Ridge one). It says right away a short paragraph on the tours, then tells you where to go, the prices and then how to contact them! Very good this one page for someone like me!

To book a tour: call (250) 242-DINO [3466] or e-mail dinotour@prprc.com

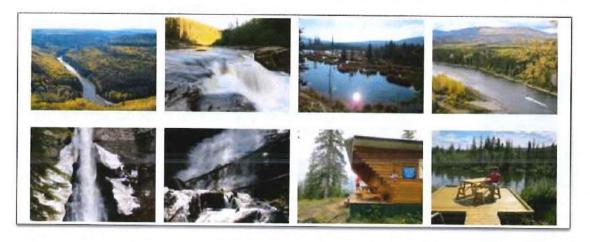
This site is where I would book from. They have some great photos (a bit small) but in the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery there was a video.

Clicked on the Natural History page to see if maybe there were more pictures or videos and there was a fair bit of text and a link http://www.wnms.ca/ so clicked on it and wow! An error page then when I clicked on the link another whole site of information.

WE HAVE MOVED!

Please go to www.wnms.ca

for a completely redesigned Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society website, with new photo galleries and many other new features.



The Wolverine and Nordic Mountain Society has an impressive page with nice photos and a modern feel to the website that I liked right away. I was still searching for pictures so clicked on Galleries and was really happy to finally see some great photos of the area. These were organized into short hikes, day hikes, snowshoeing, and other seasonal activities. It really got me inspired to see these! What a country Canada is! But, then I couldn't find any information on places to stay other than what looks like hunter cabins in the woods. This might be pretty cool to stay at but no information, so maybe it belongs to someone? http://www.wnms.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/mar15wolverineskitrails.pdf

Also on this page I was finally able to find some information about some of the geo sites in Tumbler Ridge. Since I knew that Tumbler Ridge was a UNESCO Global Geopark, I was kind of surprised not to find much information on it on the main website. This document was very difficult for me to follow though which was frustrating. http://www.wnms.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Flatbedwintergeobrochure.pdf

I went back to the main Tumbler tourism website to look again and maybe see if there were packages I missed that would make it a little simpler for me and saw on their homepage something I had missed which was the *Trip Planning* button. I clicked on it and it took me here: http://www.tumblerridge.ca/YourAdventure/SampleItineraries/tabid/91/Default.aspx but this was just 'sample' ideas about things to do. Again it was a lot of text for me! I think some short videos would have helped tell me what these different itineraries include and look like.

I used the dropdown menu on the Your Adventure page to see what summer activities there were (though I would be going in winter) just to find out if there was more packages or tours with photos or videos. I clicked on the river boating link http://www.tumblerridge.ca/YourAdventure/SummerActivities/Riverboating/tabid/81/Default.aspx again, no pictures or videos. I clicked on the company that does tours at the bottom of the page http://wildrivertours.ca/ and found on their package page only limited information and no photos or videos to help me understand what is there. As someone from very far away, this would be helpful to know. One last try, I went to the News but got an error page result. I think maybe summer seems like there is more to do for a visitor like me. I would be interested in exploring the area by river.

I did notice on the site it has a small description of the Geo Park so I clicked on it but it didn't go anywhere. I'm not sure that what they say here is true: "We officially have world class destinations." To me, world class is also international and I don't get the feeling about this place it is 'international' like other UNESCO parks.



Tumbler Ridge Geopark

Being made the first geopark in Western Canada speaks volumes to the unique territory we operate in. We officially have world class destinations.

I went back and clicked on the Contact Us on the official Tumbler Ridge site thinking maybe there would be some Facebook page link and I could get a better sense of what other people are doing on their trips, what is popular, that kind of thing but I couldn't see any social media links anywhere. I saw at the bottom of this page a link to the Visitor Guide http://www.tumblerridge.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=1rn3FdGTO3g

<u>%3d&tabid=61</u> and wow! I wished I had seen this sooner. Amazing photos here and finally a clear picture of a dinosaur track — very exciting to be honest. And helpful, a 1-800 number and email so these I will use because I do want more information, hopefully someone there can cope with my lack of English skills!

I think maybe they should offer tours with experts in the area? I would pay for this no problem! But trying to figure out all the right routes, and when is the best time to go, and where to stay—this is hard. I can figure out my gear and my travel but need someone local to help me with a tour or maybe there could be some kind of package? That would be really great, say 7 or 10 days in the backcountry with a guide.

Will I visit Tumbler Ridge at this time?

I am a confident hiker but I don't know if there is enough information here for me to feel comfortable about traveling all the way to this location.

It looks beautiful and seems incredibly interesting but I don't know that I would be able to find my way safely around and I don't know the country. It is a little concerning that the trails and hikes are potentially life-threatening but maybe there isn't the support there in terms of rescue? This is just something I thought about as I read through some of the descriptions for the various hikes. For example, this is a description for Bullmoose Falls:

Among the most challenging, Bullmoose is 45 m (149 ft) of absolutely sheer, rock-solid vertical ice, described as having "evil truck-sized gargoyles, brittle chandeliers, buttery blue slab and frosted cauliflowers". Conditions vary, depending on the day, and can be a "vertical cakewalk" or "unstable, uninsurable and climbed by pure levitation". Caution is advised, but it comes with major bragging rights. (http://www.tumblerridge.ca/YourAdventure/WinterActivities/IceClimbing/tabid/85/Default.aspx)

I get that there are lots of trails but how to I find ones that fit what I'm looking for is challenging. I need more information to make the investment to travel all that way. Add that I feel like there is not many places to stay or eat there and it creates a lot of doubt for me. I am not a picky person and don't need fancy hotels but this was just my impression from the different websites I looked at.

I think I will try to find a more established town that can offer me more support before my trip and give me the confidence to venture out into the great 'North' of Canada!

This journey did not result in the decision to visit. While every traveller is different, we can learn from everyone, we seldom have the time to stop, think and decide if we should take action.

What can be learned from this? Read on for a high level professional assessment of your destination.



2.2 The Digital Experience: A Professional Lens

The reputation of Tumbler Ridge has grown tremendously over the past several years, in no small part from its new official designation by UNESCO as a Global Geopark in 2014. The draw of its known dinosaur track program and stunning natural beauty are natural tourism draws. The region is quintessential Canada —remote northern wilderness, rich indigenous history and geological wonders found nowhere else in North America — all contribute to making Tumbler Ridge a one-of-a-kind national treasure. Yet, this is not what the digital story tells me as a visitor.

SHOW DON'T TELL

STORYTELLING IN TUMBLER RIDGE

The dinosaur experience is the central story theme that emerges. The secondary narrative surfacing across digital channels is the 'great outdoors'—recreation, the backcountry, and discovering untouched Canadian wilderness.

The Global Geopark story is a thread that appears in each of these more developed stories but is seems like a layer that doesn't yet know its place or how it fits into the destination story. The separate Facebook account for the Global Geopark is indicative of this growing 'split' in the narrative. There are a lot of promises in the copy on the website. For example, Tumbler Ridge is now recognized as 'Canada's new Dinosaur Country' but it's also described as the 'Waterfall Capital of the North'. Visitors need to know, and will look for social proof to back up the claims before they commit to visiting. Currently, the promises made are not always fulfilled by the Tumbler Ridge digital properties such as the Tumbler Ridge official website and Tumbler Ridge Facebook.



If the Global Geopark experience is another promise Tumbler Ridge is making, then the visitor needs to feel that they can trust the website (or other Tumbler Ridge digital properties) is an authentic source of real-time information about exactly what that experience will be. In today's digital world, that means backing up text with photos, testimonials, and video. In other words, **showing versus telling.**

It is critical in this early stage of the Geopark to cohesively weave these narratives into a strong destination story that works in any online or offline setting, media, or medium. Wherever the visitor finds Tumbler Ridge online, whether it be through social media or the website, these promises (geopark, waterfalls, dinosaurs, etc.) need to provide consistent messaging with a clear call-to-action.

Your Municipal Website Navigation

Section 2.1 provided a visitors lens for the online search experience in Tumbler Ridge. This revealed some issues with the overall site navigation the visitor had in finding some information, being overwhelmed by the number of pages that are primarily text-based with long scrolls, and links that took you off the page and to other websites, where the association to travellers was not clear (e.g. the paleontological research).



The top level navigation of the municipal website (http://www.districtoftumblerridge.ca/) clearly profiles tourism as important to the community. One click here immediately takes the visitor to the Tumbler Ridge visitor's site (http://www.tumblerridge.ca/) with its own URL that shows up first in the search engines.

For Canadians who know they are visiting a small town, the municipal website can be their first point of arrival and finding a clear tourism link is excellent. For a new user, in particular an international visitor unfamiliar with the region, this might be confusing as it presents a great deal of information for the user to make sense of, which in turn will make choices more difficult for them.

On the municipal website, if a visitor scrolls through the top-level navigation tabs, the dropdown menus are very useful, however, some of these links open up to pages that do not provide information on a tourism experience. For example, under the *About Tumbler Ridge*, there is a *Community Arts Council* page that talks about the mandate of the council and mentions many of the "art gallery exhibits (featuring work by local artists)" with no call to action or packages for the visitor to consider.

At the bottom of this page it sends the visitor to a different website thereby risking losing them entirely. Perhaps information on the mandate and the council would be better suited on the district website.

Another page listed under the *About* page is *Town Services*. There is only one sentence on this page followed by a link that sends them off the page. The website it leads to seems to be a website within a website and offers an overwhelming amount of information for the visitor with no clear calls to action for them to book a vacation, find a tour, or directly contact a visitor centre. The visitor 'path' becomes convoluted and frustrating at times if they are searching for tourism information. For these reasons, this page should be removed.

Town Services

For a complete listing of busineses in Tumbler Ridge, please see our Busines Directory.

The Tourism Tab on the Municipal Website that Leads to a Distinct URL

On the homepage of http://www.tumblerridge.ca/, a sub-navigation (Home, Tumbler Ridge, Getting Here, Your Adventure, Where to Stay, Share Your Story, Contact Us) provides an enormous amount of information for the visitor in text. This url is working well for the destination with a #1 position in search results in Google as the 'Official Tumbler Ridge website'.

About 455,000 results (0.48 seconds)

Official Site for Tumbler Ridge Tourism | Tumbler Ridge BC www.tumblerridge.ca/ *

Welcome to Tumbler Ridge, a year round destination for nature lovers and outdoor adventurers in Tumbler Ridge BC.
Contact Us - About Tumbler Ridge - BC Camping in Tumbler Ridge - Hiking



Under the Your Adventure tab, there are seasonal choices the visitor can make from the dropdown menu. There were no photos or videos on any of the pages or in any of these sections including Sample Itineraries. This posed a problem during the review from a visitors' lens of an international traveller, who struggled with the volume of text and very little media.

The other top-level navigation tab, <u>Share Your Story</u>, features a form that asks the user to submit their story. Below it appears that submitted stories are supposed to 'appear' but they do not and the interaction is broken. This creates disappointment for the user and could potentially be hurting the reputation of Tumbler Ridge in relation to new visitors considering coming to the destination.

Experiences in Tumbler Ridge Records per Page 25 : Page 1 of 1 First Provious Next Last

MOBILE:

The official Tumbler Ridge website is not responsive meaning the user is forced to constantly enlarge small text and scroll through a fairly substantial amount of text to find the information they need. The website doesn't detect which device the user is using (smartphone, tablet, or desktop) and this leads to a diminished user experience on mobile. The design of the current website is, on most pages, not taking into consideration the visitor that is traveling and needing simple navigation, directions, and visuals to guide them. Given the location and the activities for Tumbler Ridge, a mobile friendly (responsive) website would enhance the visitor's experience.

MEDIA: Text

Most destinations can only dream of having the topography and natural wonders that Tumbler Ridge has. The challenge for Tumbler Ridge is how to leverage these natural wonders into an online experience that increases visitation.

Currently, there is a lot of copy on the official website 'telling' the visitor the benefits of visiting but it isn't much showing them. With only seconds to engage an online user, it is critical to tell a visual narrative alongside key facts and call-to-action language that directs their experience on every page of the website. The limited use

Home About Tumbler Rid.

of photography and video mean that the site is primarily relying on 'telling' and not showing.

And some of the dropdown menus 'are about you' not the traveller — e.g. the Museum Foundation, the Community Arts Council ... how do these community services inspire visitation? Why are they relevant? Should they be there?





Look at this example of the Stonehammer Geopark in New Brunswick. It has a large photo slider at the top of the page, clear tabs with very little copy you can click on. With very few words they provide a sense of place, experience, the Geopark credibility and social icons so visitors can see what others are saying, posting, recommending.

This page is not over-explaining to the user with copy; it allows high-discoverability which gets the user curious and working to explore the content.





MEDIA: Photos and Videos

The reviews from a visitor lens revealed a lack of photography and video on the official Tumbler website. The user had to go to the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society website to find the photos they were looking for and even when they did, they were embedded in a gallery (http://www.wnms.ca/?page_id=16) that required clicking back and forth between photos in a slider then back to the gallery and so on — not the most user friendly experience. Additionally, the user ends up no longer being on the Tumbler Ridge website because they have clicked off the page in search of photos on another website (in this case the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society website).

MEDIA: Audio

There were no audio links. Here's an opportunity to record the voices of visitors who love waterfalls, dinosaurs, hiking trails, being out in nature, as well as connecting to people who are interested in the science related to palaeontology, to learning about the windmill farms.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Facebook

There are no social icons on the official Tumbler Ridge site, although the weather icon was great given this is an outdoor recreation destination. A quick search on Facebook did not bring up the Tumbler Ridge page. However, a search on Twitter brought up the official Tumbler Ridge account (https://twitter.com/TumblerRidgeBC) on which the Facebook page could be found. However, there are two Facebook pages competing for the same eyeballs. The Tumbler Ridge Geopark page (which has great visuals and information about hikes), and the official Tumbler Ridge page which appears to be posting much of the same content as the Global Geopark page.

Social media is a critical influencer throughout the path to purchase. Ensuring social content leads to 'purchase' requires a dedicated presence that can show up in real-time on official Tumbler Ridge channels. Linking to social media from both the tourism and municipal websites will increase the 'virtuous loop' of driving customers to engage in a conversation with, and about, Tumbler Ridge.



SOCIAL MEDIA: Instagram

As of 31 August there were 3,964 images tagged with #tumblerridge on Instagram which indicates visitors are on this channel and sharing stories about the destination. There is a Tumbler Ridge Instagram account but it is someone's personal account so this is an opportunity for the destination to establish an account and engage and create a dialogue with their visitors. Strategically using the #TumblerRidge hashtag, adding #ExploreBC and #ExploreCanada to tap into these communities on Instagram, will create a real-time presence, provide up-to-the-minute information on conditions, and establish Tumbler Ridge as the authority in Canada as a UNESCO Global Geopark location.

Opening up the conversation to a global audience is possible given there are 421,798 photos tagged with #UNESCO and #17,170 with #Geopark on Instagram. By using these hashtags you can be part of a larger conversation and bring awareness to Tumbler Ridge's special designation, and network with visitors keen to experience Geopark's and the unique geography of Northern British Columbia.

Additionally Instagram provides great visual content that can be published onto the existing Facebook page and Twitter channels.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Twitter

The official <u>Tumbler Ridge Twitter</u> channel has a somewhat sporadic posting schedule, often posting multiple times over a few days then there will be a weeklong gap. Consistency equals engagement on this platform; using a dashboard like Hootsuite⁴ can prevent these gaps when the staff member who is responsible for posting content to the Twitter channel is unable to post and allow all schedule posts to get published in a consistent manner. The Twitter feed is, similar to the website, lacking visual content. The tweet below would perform much better were there a photo of Nesbitt Knee Falls and/or Kinuseo Falls.

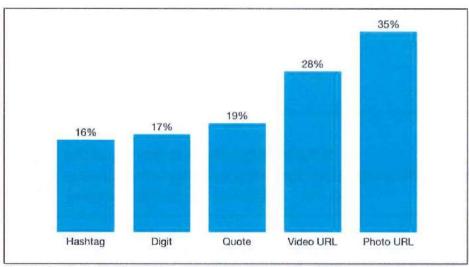


Tumbler Ridge, BC @TumblerRidgeBC - May 16

A quick hike to Nesbitt's Knee Falls and Barbour Falls is a great side trip on the way to or from Kinuseo Falls.

⁴ Hootsuite is a social media management tool that allows businesses to manage multiple social media accounts from one place and schedule posts to channels at different times of day/week/month/year as well as monitor who is talking about the destination at any given time.

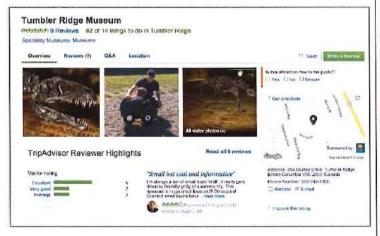
According to Buffer, Tweets with images receive 35% more retweets than those without. Below is a breakdown of various kinds of content its engagement level on Twitter:



Via Buffer Social, retrieved from https://blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-images, September 2015

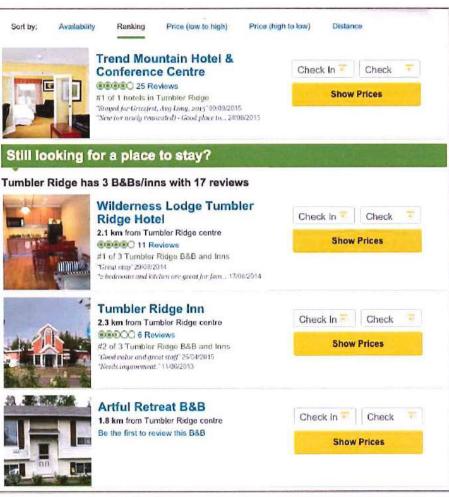
Social Media: Trip Advisor

The information on TripAdvisor is limiting and misleading. The accommodation information alone has the Tumbler Ridge Inn using a picture of the town hall as its image. The Artful Retreat is actually Mila's B&B, also confusing for visitors. The Wilderness Lodge is advertised as a B&B when it is not. The Trend Mountain Hotel and Conference Centre was the only property that was accurate.



The Tumbler Ridge Museum is actually the Dinosaur Discovery Centre, there is no actual museum in town (see section 3.8).

TripAdvisor is the number #1 trusted source for traveller reviews, having so much inaccurate information is not beneficial. Efforts should be made immediately to correct these listings and ensure the full range of opportunities are available for guests to read about and contribute their stories.



Conclusion: Digital Presence

There is a wealth of information on the official Tumbler Ridge tourism website (<u>tumblerridge.ca</u>). While this seems like a positive attribute, it requires a great deal of cross-referencing by the visitor as they try to figure out the relationship between tourism in Tumbler Ridge (<u>tumblerridge.ca</u>) and numerous organizations offering tourism or selling tourism, such as the Wolverine Mountain Nordic Society (<u>wmns.ca</u>), the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark (<u>trgg.ca</u>) which is mostly a site under construction, and Grizfest (<u>grizfest.com</u>).

The path-to-purchase is unclear and the WMNS appears to be the lead tourism organization — which you discover upon visiting they are not. The Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation which leads with the Global Geopark story has a soundtrack that plays two audios simultaneously which means you can't listen to either, and the call to-action is to donate to the Foundation — it is not about visitors. Griz Fest gets a higher profile on the Tumbler Ridge website than the Geopark which is odd, especially as it is an annual event, presumably the town wants visitors year-round and to optimize their UNESCO status as an iconic differentiator.

The result: The online experience is fragmented and the visitor has to work hard to understand the travel opportunity, diminishing the online experience and leaving a person confused and frustrated, rather than excited and confident to book their travel. This same experience occurs with the print information as will be discussed in section 2.3. The questions become:

- · Is this the pre-trip experience the business community, municipality and Geopark volunteers want for visitors?
- Does this type of presence install confidence and motivate a visit? Looking through the visitor lens of 'Gunter' our German traveller, who could be defined as an ideal guest would indicated the invitation is not compelling enough. For the two assessors who visited the town, the experience was the same. There is a lack of clear, succinct information for travellers on any of the sites.

The Global Geopark designation is your differentiator. Unique to British Columbia and Canada, Tumbler Ridge has the potential to attract visitors to the town and become the 'hub' for travellers to stay, explore, and return to explore more of the Geopark.

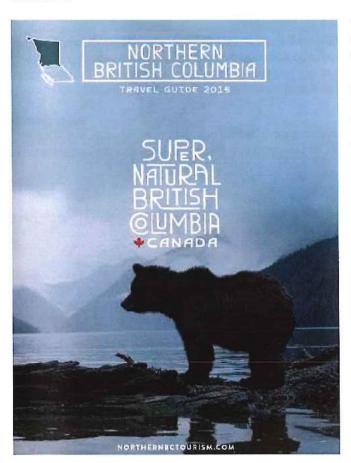
The Geopark designation is also new and not understood by people which means educating your ideal guests, businesses and funding partners about this status must be a critical part of the investment ahead. It is important for people to understand what a Global Geopark is, why Tumbler Ridge was recognized, and to drive tourism — what benefits does this provide to travellers. In the experience economy, this is referred to as 'harmonizing the environment' and this must apply to the online experience, the print materials, visitor centre insights, and the lived experience.

Developing a brand and a strong story that incorporates the geological bounty of the area and the range of ways to enjoy the Global Geopark and Tumbler Ridge should be a strategic priority for the digital presence of this destination in the future.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunities 1, 2 and 3)

2.3 The Print Material

Tumbler Ridge has 1 and ½ pages in the regional provincial travel guide that visually promotes hiking, waterfalls, fishing, snowmobiling, and Kinuseo Falls. There are 13 highlighted activities to do while visiting that encompasses activities in the community as well as the surrounding area. It mentions 37 trails, which is inaccurate as the map produced by the Northern BC Tourism Association lists 47 trails — a detail that should be corrected.



There is no profile mentions of this area being designated a UNESCO Global Geopark region, nor that it is uniquely only the second in Canada. Rather, there is a small sentence tucked into the text that could be easily missed.

As this is the only Global Geopark in British Columbia, the second in Canada, and home to the second largest Canadian waterfall next to Niagara Falls, the opportunity exits to provide a more differentiated and compelling set of reasons to visit.

The Global Geopark is unique and should be promoted as a reason to visit.



Three Northern BC Regional Brochures ... What's the Difference?

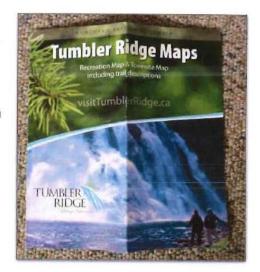


The Tumbler Ridge brochure was the most readily available brochure and the one provided when asking 'what is there to do?'

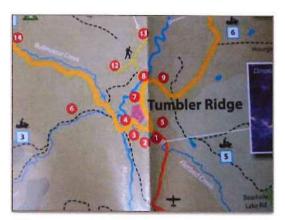
Only one acknowledges the Global Geopark, and it is a small logo clustered with six others, so it is easily missed and does not draw your attention to this unique aspect of the region. The different covers inspire you to pick each one up—but then as a traveller you are faced with comparing them to see what there is to do. There is no date and there are modest differences, but not enough to invest in three brochures that convey principally the same information, albeit one prioritizes waterfalls, the other hiking.

As a traveller you feel guilty for 'killing a tree' when you realize these brochures are basically the same, so two of the three will end up in the garbage, as their were no recycling bins found in the hotels or around town.

The single most valuable element of this publication was the Tumbler Ridge Areas and Recreation Maps tear-out. It highlighted 12 Recreational Sites, 13 snowmobiling/ATV trails, and 47 hiking trails with brief descriptions of the hiking trails and provided context for the area. It doesn't however delineate the Global Geopark designated area, so you are left guessing.



Trying to Align the Marketing Materials is Difficult and Time Consuming



Tumbler Bids

About the Bids Advisor Bids Banding Rates

Trails

Palancing Rates

History Trails

RALAGONE RABBIES

Roller Gorden

Grad Baback Folls

History Trails

Ralagone Rabbies

History Trails

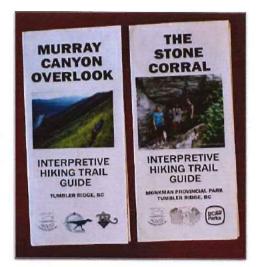
Ralagone Rabbies

Rabb

The number of trail maps is both amazing and overwhelming. Amazing because they provide a tremendous amount of information, but also confusing for several reasons:

- There are so many different brochures some are trails, some are Geosites, some are a combination, some are interpretative, all appear to be produced by different organizations and none of them have numbers so you don't know, and in fact can't find them all on the area map.
- Some of the brochures have two trails (e.g. Boulder Gardens #34 and Babcock Falls #35) and the Shipyard Titanic which is recommended by locals, can't be found on the map or in a brochure, but it is actually #34 Boulder Gardens?
- The difference between the photocopied maps vs. the professionally produced raise questions — are those with 'interpretive' information the only ones of the 47 that provide information - in which case should a visitor wanting to learn go to these places?
- The connection to the Tumbler Ridge Dinosaur brochures doesn't align at all with the map.
- You don't know if these areas are in the Global Geopark for only some have the Geopark Logo on it.

The result: A very frustrating and time consuming game of 'match to match' before you can even begin to figure out if the trail is of interest beyond its physical location and the time you have to access it. As one family told us "It's so hard to figure out which trail to take, your day is half over reading all the brochures."





The Maps have Different Numbering Schemas

Depending on which brochure a visitor receives, or finds, the trail number are different in the pieces of collateral that have maps. For example:

- Wapiti Falls is #37 and Wapiti Lake #38 in the Global Geopark brochure, and Wapiti Lake-Onion Lake is #44 in the Tumbler Ridge Area Map
 - · Do the falls go into Wapiti Lake? Onion Lake? What's the difference? The visitor is left not knowing
- · Flatbed Falls is #3 on the Global Geosites brochure but #2 on the Recreation Map; and
- Shipyard-Titanic is on neither, yet highly recommended by locals in the community?
- Quality Falls is #10 on the Global Geosites brochure but #9 on the Recreation Map ... and the list goes on.

The lack of harmonization no doubt represents organic growth, but the time has come to align the print collateral, simplify, brand, and reduce the volume. This will improve the guest experience and decrease print and brochure racking costs.



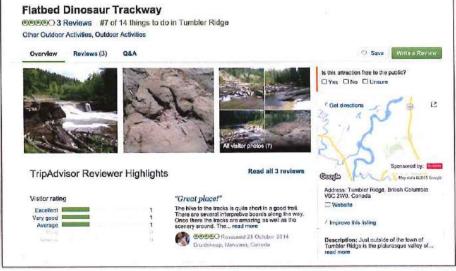


Multiple Brochures to the Same Location is Confusing.

The Flatbeds you discover, after being in the community, are one of the 'must see and dos'. But where to go, what to do, how to enjoy, and the fact the Dinosaur Discovery Centre offers tours here is confusing. Multiple brochures give different pieces of information, and a quick check on TripAdvisor to see if there is a simple answer there adds a fourth dimension to the confusion.

As a visitor — fragmented, duplicated, multiple versions of print materials is exhausting and you find yourself buried in trying to figure things out — rather than enjoying the destination. When you ask a local, they almost always refer you to the Visitor Centre to 'get a brochure' and at the Centre you are directed to 'a brochure'. (See Chapter 5, Opportunity #3).





Nice to see some Information in German and French

Gaining Global Geopark status for the region will hopefully, in time, increase the appeal of international travellers. Seeing efforts to ensure there is some degree of translated material is a good start. Once the Global Geopark and area is fully branded and the community has a sense of which countries their guests are coming from, carefully selected collateral pieces can be scheduled for translation.

Consideration should be given in working with the RDÉE Canada (Le Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité), the Francophone economic development organization which has a tourism focus and a goal of attracting and servicing French speaking visitors (http://tourisme-cb.com/). As this is a Global Geopark, seeking partnerships with translation schools could provide an avenue for affordable translation. For example UBC has a program for Chinese translation (https://cstudies.ubc.ca/programs/translation-interpretation-business-chinese-certificate), McGill University offers a French translation program (https://www.mcgill.ca/continuingstudies/programs-and-courses/translation/undergraduate-programs/certificate-translation-%E2%80%93-english-and-french) and there are many others in the country. In time, and as the visitor base diversifies, if it does, consideration for parts of the website to have second or third language information could be helpful.



The Volume of Trail Maps is Overwhelming



With 47 trails to choose from as a visitor, the question becomes 'Where do I begin?"

Virtually everyone refers to you as a visitor to the racks of trail maps that are well distributed around town and in the visitor centre. As none of them are numbered to align with the Recreational Area map, as a visitor you are constantly required to cross-reference to ensure you 'are in the right place'. As well, as there are multiple maps for the same site, time is wasted in figuring out different aspects of the trail to determine its relevance to your interests and the time available.

Overall, the brochures provide terrific information and as a new person to the area, you wouldn't want to head out to a trail without the map — this should be advertised. But, there is room for harmonization and improvement to the over 60 individual brochures.

The majority are produced by the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society and provide:

- · An iconic view to provide a visual, geographical anchor;
- Maps with varying degrees of details, some connect to the access road, others do not, and some have inset maps;
- Driving directions are extremely helpful, the distances, elevation and time estimates;
- Cautionary information and some insights into what the trail offers relative to the sites and hike;
- Ratings of Easy, Moderate, Moderate with qualifiers (e.g. steep and rocky), and Challenging;
- A dual call-to-action to the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society but locals confirm this is a volunteer group and Charles Helm is the local doctor, so if you call that number you won't get any visitor information;
- The range of what you assume are 'sponsor logos' vary on the different brochures which is important, but doesn't add value to a traveler decision making. More important information could be on the front cover including the trail number, the difficulty rating (that then is described within) and a time estimate so at a glance decision making is enhanced. The importance of sponsor logos is critical, for after visiting the community you fully appreciate the value of the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society's contribution to the Geopark and the trail system this should be relocated to the back panel of the brochures with a consistent message.

A second set of high gloss, more professional brochures exist for the Stone Correl (#28), Kinuseo Falls (#30 or #39 — you have to try and figure this out), and the Murray Canyon Overlook (#10). Two indicate interpretive information, all have different branding and logos and only the Murray Canyon Overlook is identified as being in the Geopark. As three are of a higher quality and have interpretation, you are left wondering 'are these the best trails, for they have invested in more expensive brochures? Or is it related to sponsors and budgets at the time of production?

What is missing from all of them, from a visitors lens is:



- Numbers that match the map!
- A picture of the trail is great, add an inset of the way finding sign so visitors know what
 they are looking for when driving to the trail;
- A description of what is meant by an easy trail, moderate, or and challenging trail. Is it based on fitness, length, endurance, altitude?
- Wildlife you can anticipate and any safety information;
- Any weather considerations e.g. if a fog rolls in, when do you need to be off the trail?
- Which trails are cross-use (e.g. hiking and mountain biking, hiking and waterfalls, snowmobile and ATV, any other combo). Consider a symbol approach in a brochure design:
- · Which have washrooms, potable water, wifi access, interpretive signage enroute;
- Road conditions to the trail and parking (e.g. Kinuseo Falls, everyone advises to expect
 a flat tire, other trails do not have convenient parking for RVs, etc.)
- A single call to action for visitor information (most likely the Visitor Information Centre), and a second for content updates (the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society).
- · Emergency information if someone is in distress or lost.

Mountain Bilding

Canoeing

Destinations

Make Sure to Bring your Gear - there are no Rentals

Canoeing and mountain biking is promoted in small pamphlets found in various locations.

The Mountain Biking Trails are also the hiking trails in most cases, but this is not cross advertised in the hiking trails — so the potential for conflict exists. Indicating on trail maps, which accept Mountain Bikes would increase the safety for all. Once in town you learn there are no mountain bike rentals, so you must be a local, or know to rack your bikes and bring them along — this is not conveyed to travellers in advance.

Canoeing is recommended in nine locations, however there is no mention that you must bring your own canoe. There is no evidence of rentals or guided tours in the Global Geopark area.

> Rock-climbers are starting to find this location, and bolt hangers are strategically located in awe-inspiring places such as the Shipwreck Titanic location. This isn't promoted on the website, nor in print information — we discovered this opportunity by running into other climbers. It would appear that these opportunities are for locals who know about the region, rather than being celebrated and used as a fourism draw.

> > There is very little information available about where to fish, and again, the potential to find supplies does not exist in the town, nor does information — so come prepared. The feeling you get as a visitor is this is an activity for locals only.



Efforts should be made to reach out to these diverse activity groups and let them know what Tumbler Ridge has to offer. A compressive list of activities, at a minimum, should be on the website. And given there is no sport store, no rentals, to retail outlet selling anything related to the core activities in the town — this needs to be transparently communicated so people arrive prepared and equipped to avoid disappointment.



Conclusion: Print Material = Brand Confusion and Information Overload

There is so much print information, so many websites, all representing disparate elements of the amazing opportunity that awaits, that needs to be simplified. The local market, campers, fishermen may know about Tumbler Ridge, all the community organizations that work so hard to make the town special and achieve the Geopark Designation. But for a traveller from away, it represents clutter and confusion — sorry.









Professionally you can tell there has been organic growth that has led to the Global Geopark designation and the focus has been on promoting all the organizations contributing. To drive tourism forward you must now focus on the visitor, a single, harmonized brand, that excites rather than confuses the visitor. Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark is the one that will generate the greatest mileage for it combines place (Tumbler Ridge) with credibility and alignment into an international designated family (Global Geopark). The brand will need to be developed, appropriately and professionally, recognizing the organizations profiled in their appropriate place, but for visitor online and print collateral, it must focus on the traveller and differentiating what is unique — and there is a lot! The Geopark, second largest waterfall next to Niagara Falls, iconic events such as the Emperors's challenge, endless waterfalls, amazing trails, cross-use and single trails for hiking, mountain biking, ATV'ing and snowmobiling ... and of course dinosaurs! This is a gem for the right travellers and investing in a harmonized brand that all stakeholder organizations will embrace, use, and simplify will be to the benefit of all. (See Chapter 5, Opportunities 1, 2 and 3)

2.4 Visitor Information Centres (VIC)

A total of 9 locations were accessed to gather information on Tumbler Ridge and the Global Geopark. The most useful, or order of helpfulness and volume of information were: (1) Tumbler Ridge (2) Taylor (3) Hudson Hope (4) Dawson Creek.

| City | Address | Website | Hours | Phone |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|--------------|
| Comox Valley | 101-3607 Small Rd. Cumberland | http://www.discovercomoxvalley.com/explore/ vancouver-island-visitor-centre | Daily 9:00am — 5:00pm, 7 days a week | 855-400-2882 |
| Vancouver | Airport | _ | _ | -0 |
| Fort St. John | Airport | - | _ | - |
| Fort St John | 9324 96th Avenue | http://www.fortstjohn.ca/visitor-services | M/F: 8am - 7pm, S/S: 9am to 6pm | 250-785-4592 |
| Taylor | 10316 - 100 S | http://www.districtoftaylor.com/visit/visitor-information- centre | Daily: 9:00 am-5:00 pm | 250-789-9015 |
| Dawson Creek | 900 Alaska Ave | http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/visitorinfo.php | Daily: 8 am – 6:30 pm | 250-782-9595 |
| Tumbler Ridge | 270 Southgate | http://www.visittumblerridge.ca | Daily: 10am-3pm | 250-242-3123 |
| Chetwynd | 5400 North Access Rd, Chetwynd, | http://www.hellobc.com/visitorcentrelisting/4548213/ chetwynd-visitor-centre.aspx | Year-round, no hours posted and upon arrival learned it no longer operated. | 250-788-1943 |
| Hudson Hope | 9555 Beattle Drive | http://hudsonshope.ca/adventure/visitor-centre/ | Daily, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, May 1- September 30 | 250-783-9154 |

The Experience:

It was a pleasant surprise to find the Tumbler Ridge brochure in the **Comox Valley VIC**, for while the travel counsellor had never heard of the town, when it was mentioned it is in Northern BC she was quick to go to the rack, see if they had anything, then begin online searching (which is redundant for it has already been done as a visitor).



The first Vancouver Airport Visitor information station was unmanned, only a phone to pick up for information, but it didn't lead to tourism information, only airport information, The second Visitor information station had staff and they confirmed they do not provide tourism information, that this role has been eliminated. They had never heard of Tumbler Ridge, or a Global Geopark, and suggested if we left the 'secure area' (why would you on a connecting flight) that the information booth outside in the public, non-secure area 'may have something'.

The Fort St. John airport arrivals area provided a brochure rack that drew your attention immediately to Dawson Creek. There were however a couple of brochures that begin the 'gathering of print information' that we were looking for in hard copy. The Tap Know and Go looked interesting and we assumed at a gateway airport it would provide regional information, but it was mostly Fort— St. John, so not helpful — back to brochures for arrival information!







Avis Car Rental was amazing. They had excellent information and were so excited that we had chosen Tumbler Ridge Our 'host' told us about Kinuseo Falls, recommended we spend an entire day there to enjoy, hike, relax, and then stay overnight. He mentioned 'it is a small town' but if you like to hike or go into small town museums you could easily spend a few days there and we should go there first if that is our destination, then visit other areas if we have time. TALK ABOUT AN AMBASSADOR! But that wasn't the end, he left his station, found a map and drew out a route, asking what I was interested in and then connecting the dots, including travel south via Hudson's Hope for the best view of the Peace Region - a more enjoyable journey, and part of a view of Canada that would be lost with Site C Dam.

The Fort St. John VIC offered a relaxed, explore for yourself access for the first 2 minutes! The counsellor mentioned they were out of brochures for Tumbler Ridge when I asked what there was to do there, and she recommended Kinuseo falls and hiking. She provided me with a map of the trails but wasn't able to answer questions about the

intensity, fitness level required to enjoy, weather and wildlife considerations as this isn't on the brochure. She knew the area was designated a Global Geopark but didn't know what it meant.

Taylor VIC always has a wealth of knowledge about the region and community. The gal on duty had visited the community, could talk about its history, people, resources, trails, difference of accommodations. She immediately added insight to the 'journey' by pulling out a map and highlighting points of interest, how long we needed to stop and enjoy, even food recommendations! She described all the accommodations (as there are only a few) with price point consideration but no judgement on where to stay simply 'what fits your style and budget.' She responded to our questions on bear bells and safety professionally and went as far as suggesting if we don't know anyone in the area, to leave our name with the Visitor Centre staff as this was a new function in town, and a main focal point for the community. Knowing there were Windmills in the area, but nothing for tourists, she suggested if we were interested in Windmills to stop in Dawson Creek, get information there and visit those as they are visitor friendly.



At the Dawson Creek VIC the highlight was a quick dive into exactly what we were hoping to enjoy, a referral to the Tumbler Ridge VIC and once we mentioned dinosaurs,

the counsellor jumped on the phone, called a colleague to see what was available, open, prices, and when we needed to be there as we only had a couple of days. It resulted in us taking the Lantern Tour. She also asked if we were 'readers' and when we said yes, had a packet of information available for sale with three small books and a tonne of information about the community. Specific, targeted, and what we needed.



Tumbler Ridge VIC was prompt, responsive, friendly and a wealth of information. There was great pride in their new building, the ambiance allowed for walking around. Entering the building caught us off guard as you were faced with an empty hall, sign, and access blocked off. Second impression — negative, they are closed. Then we realized the VIC was to the right of the roped off staircase. Inside was a friendly hello on arrival and racks of information, heavily weighed to trails. There was no mention of paid attractions or opportunities with tour operators until we asked, at which point the dinosaur tours, ATV, and boat tour information was provided. As time and experience on the trails led us to change our minds on what to do during our days in town, we returned 3 times, and they remembered us, and what we were interested in, which was a wonderful connection as a traveller. The physical space however is lovely on the outside, function once in the centre but the entrance has you wondering: Am I in the right place?



Beautiful exterior, loved the flags! The building matched the hype we heard about it!



The welcome into the building didn't match the exterior. First impressions "Empty, not welcome."



Spacious, open feel, room to relax, converse and expand the retail.

Chetwynd VIC was no more! Still advertised on the website as existing, it is now the Chamber of Commerce office. Dead end for travellers.

Hudson Hope VIC carried the most information on fishing, camping, hiking, and off-season activities without prompting. She has the points of interest from their town down to the turnoffs, and quickly produced maps to guide us. Ironically we never mentioned we were campers, so this was an interesting set of recommendations, nothing on hotels or B&Bs till prompted!

(See Chapter 5, Opportunity #8).

2.5 A Summary of Suggestions to Enhance the Pre-Visitor Experience

Tumbler Ridge is on the cusp of welcoming the world with expanded opportunities as a result of the Global Geopark designation. This brings with it expectations from visitors of a UNESCO level of quality and engagement. Approaching the pre-visitor experience holistically will allow you to leverage your investments in text, video, images, audio, and the places where this information is used online and in print.

The old ways of marketing are long gone. Storytelling and engaging travellers in conversations is the new norm. It should change the way people feel about you business of community because it requires an emotional investment.

Know which social media sites your guests are using and commit to developing and managing them.

It's not about you controlling the story. Rather it's about celebrating what is authentically yours, focusing on your ideal guests, and inviting them to help you tell a richer, deeper, more diverse story that you could ever imagine yourself.

Media: Text, Video, Images, Audio

- 1. Know your story and consistently tell it in all Tumbler Ridge digital mediums including websites, social media, video, and photography.
- 2. Make it easy for the visitor! Give them big, bold, beautiful photos above the fold. Theme the photos (nature, people, dinosaur, recreation) and link them to key navigation related to the travel experience in Tumbler Ridge. These could be: Places to Stay, Geopark Adventures, Dinosaur Tracks, The Gear You'll Need, or similar type thematic grouping.
- Integrate 'real-time' conversation into the official Tumbler Ridge website by publishing RSS feed of Twitter and featuring Instagram photos
 created by visitors in a regular homepage spot visitors can easily see. Ensure a call to action to follow social media channels is clear and easy
 to click through to Facebook, Twitter, and others (as they become developed).
- 4. Think about how media will be distributed; plan ahead for social media by creating short (30-40 seconds) videos and ensure posts are always accompanied by a photograph for higher engagement.
- 5. Utilize photographs to support 'themes' such as Places to Stay, Adventure, Dinosaur Hunting, Geopark Tours on website.
- 6. Establish a YouTube channel to capitalize on the second largest search engine and provide a platform for video that can be shared across other digital properties such as social media and website. YouTube also encourages visitors to share content with others and can be embedded by hospitality partners, tour companies, agencies, and more. Additionally, finding vendors and partner videos to share is a critical strategy for a small destination. For example, the recent video by Above Tumbler Ridge (https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=zGhlNcMbRhw&feature=youtu.be) should be shared and embedded on the official Tumbler Ridge page to highlight the many stunning environments available to a visitor when they visit.



Digital Connections

1. Mobile:

- With mobile usage growing every day, website's need to be designed with the user experience in mind—which means taking in
 consideration all size screens from desktop to smart phone to tablet and what contexts these are being used in. Keep information
 architecture simple, easy to use, highly focused and designed to meet visitors' needs on each page.
- 2. Management: Utilize a social media management dashboard such as Hootsuite to ensure consistency of posts published on Twitter.

3. Website:

- Merge the Tumbler Ridge Facebook page with Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark page or ensure a content calendar and strategy is shared between the two so each offer a specific and unique experience and value add for visitors;
- Create a new look and feel for the official Tumbler Ridge website that is led by the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark; this is your unique differentiator;
- Ensure all dropdown menu links are useful; eliminate any pages or copy that does not directly inform and help the visitor choose Tumbler Ridge as a destination to visit;
- Enlarge on page text by 50%; use a 'chunking' strategy to break up each page so the user isn't scrolling for a long time or having to consume long paragraphs of text;
- · Post social icons at the top of each page so visitors can quickly access official accounts; and
- Consider bringing in content from social media channels to be featured on the home page of the Official Tumbler Ridge tourism
 website. A Twitter RSS feed and 'featured' photos from Facebook could be two ways to do this. Additionally, creating an Instagram
 channel would be highly recommended given the natural beauty of the destination.

Facebook:

- On all Facebook posts: Locate the visitor as to where a photo is taken, who is in the picture, and what is unique about it. Tell a story! Was it a visitor sharing a photo of their experience? If so, were they local, international? What is special about that particular photo that is unique to Tumbler Ridge?
- Ask your Facebook community to comment by asking them questions. If you post a picture of Northern Lights, ask them if they have any
 pictures of Northern Lights they'd like to share? When was their best Northern Lights spot to view in Tumbler Ridge? If Northern Lights
 are a popular topic, consider creating a unique hashtag campaign and have visitors share their Tumbler Ridge Northern Lights photos by
 tagging them then announce and share the 'winner'; and
- Increase the quantity of short video posts and post these natively (uploaded directly to Facebook) as this increases engagement by up to 60%.

5. Instagram:

Create an Instagram account and utilize hashtags that have established communities such as #UNESCO and #Geopark to leverage
existing conversations and 'eyeballs' searching for these subjects on Instagram; and

Consistently tag all posts with #TumblerRidge and utilize short video feature (15 seconds) to showcase events, popular hikes, waterfalls, geopark experiences, and dinosaur activities. Instagram content can be published to Facebook, making it easier to create visual content out 'in the field' and in real-time.

6. Trip Advisor:

- There are few listings there and what is there has some inaccuracies these need to be reviewed and corrected immediately.
- While you may not want all your trails listed, those that the town want to profile and draw attention to that are closest to town and reach the largest audience could be added to the site;
- Consider renaming the Tumbler Ridge Museum, the Tumbler Ridge Discovery Centre the actual name of the attraction "Dinosaur Discovery Gallery" to avoid confusion looking for a museum; and
- Encourage all restaurants in town to have a TripAdvisor account, and because the Action Play serves local, homemade food, ensure
 they include this as a differentiator in their description.

7. Hashtag:

 Utilize destination hashtag (#TumblerRidge) on Twitter and Instagram (when established) along with provincial #ExploreBC, national #ExploreCanada and international #UNESCO and #GeoPark #Dinosaur and #alpinism hashtags to expand your social influence and reach.

Print Materials

- Decrease the amount of print collateral by removing duplication, aligning everything under the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and
 using only one map for the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark; suggest building on the current Recreation & Townsite Map produced by
 Northern BC Tourism Association.
- Thoroughly review all messages and advertisements in the Destination BC's provincial guides and Northern BC regional guides to
 ensure the Global Geopark is prominently profiled and the diversity of the visitor opportunities are fully portrayed.
- Establish a common look and feel for the brochures that clearly identify all assets within the Global Geopark boundaries. Align the
 number scheme to the map, ensure only one brochure per trail exists, align content in a consistent presentation, and consider a
 'series format' to differentiate between the hiking/waterfall trails, and those that promote other activities such as ATV/Snowmobiling,
 mountain biking, camping, fishing, and rock climbing;
- It is highly recommended that a hiking trail template be designed, branded with the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and consistent content be provided on each brochure. Appreciating the majority of them have been created through the kindness and good graces of volunteers, funds in the Geopark operating budget should be leveraged with regional economic development or provincial marketing funds to produce a new, harmonized series of brochures and involve the volunteer experts in the design, accuracy, new content if they are willing. This is too important to leave to chance.
- Ensure the connection between the digital assets and physical marketing materials is harmonized.
- Publish social media url's and 'handles' on print materials with social media icons. (@TumblerRidgeBC for Twitter for example).

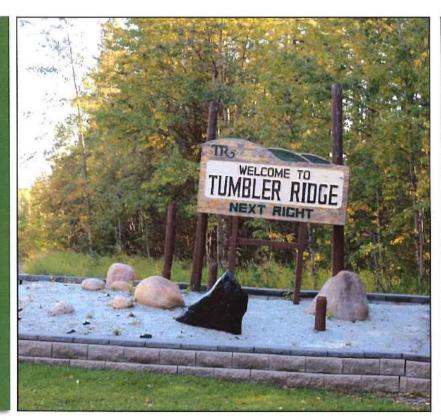
Visitor Servicing

- Annually meet with the various car rental agencies to provide a brief information session to the different rental agents at the airport in
 Fort St. John and Prince George (Dawson Creek?). Consider securing free passes to the 'Lantern Tour' to encourage them to visit and
 stay overnight to get to know the town and what you have to offer.
- Send a handwritten thank you to Avis for their excellent staff information and start to build a relationship with a key conduit who can influence the traveller.
- Create an information piece and conduct an online seminar for all provincial VIC staff to educate them about the Global Geopark, why it
 is unique, how it links visitors to other places in BC and could be something to refer to guests. Record the session so it is available to
 the VIC network, and others to watch at their leisure. This needs to be targeted to VIC people, not generic Global Geopark/Visit Us
 information.
- Invest in improvements to the first impressions upon entering the VIC building. Seeing a dinosaur poster and a big red rope on stanchion that says, 'do not enter' should be addressed. The poster doesn't add value, the information should be in the VIC. Adding paintings from local artists, sold on consignment through the VIC would beautify the space at no cost. Add a hallway sign that says, "Welcome Visitors" with an arrow to the right. Ask yourselves, is the red rope necessary? Could discreet signage regarding what's 'downstairs' be a more welcoming and informative alternative.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunities #1, 2, 3 and 8).



3. Visiting Tumbler Ridge: Discoveries & Suggestions



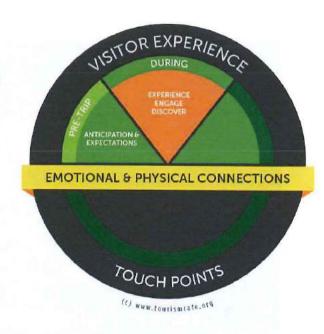
"A product
is what you buy,
an experience
is what you remember.

Destination Canada

Congratulations - you've persuaded someone to visit Tumbler Ridge and/or the newly designated Global Geopark. The pre-trip engagement has resulted in the decision to visit, or revisit, and you are welcoming a traveller to your community.

Accessible by motor vehicle (car, trailer, RV, motor cycle), Fort St. John or Prince George are the closest airports north and south (Dawson Creek Airport is serviced by Hawkair daily from Vancouver!). A wide range of variables were considered such as: signage (way-finding and interpretation), beautification, pedestrian friendliness, availability of public washroom, parking, visitor information, diversity of trails, anchor attractions, tours, recreational activities, accommodations, restaurants, transportation options, the overall welcome and feel as a traveller, public spaces, streetscapes, operating hours, evening activities, wifi access, and retail.

This chapter provides insights about the visitor experience from the perspective of first time BC visitors, who have been to Northern BC, but never to Tumbler Ridge. One is a *Cultural Explorer* with a constant love for travel and a love of immersing in a culture, nature, and most importantly, connecting with the locals — which is why she loves visiting small towns. The other is an authentic experiencer who also loves to connect, enjoys history, and authentic, down-to-earth experiences. Visuals and a short description highlight what was learned, followed by a number referencing an opportunity that will be discussed in Chapter 5.



It is a professional, third party assessment of the visitor experience, the opportunities to engage with the people, places and cultures that make Tumbler Ridge special and discover a new destination.

Managing the visitor experience at the destination or community level requires investing in the physical assets and the emotional connections a traveller has with the people, places and cultures of a destination, the communities and businesses they encounter.

Their memories will be based on the sum of all touch points, senses stimulated, emotions evoked, and interactions enjoyed, before, during, and after.

⁵ The Authentic Experiencer and Cultural Explorer are two of the traveller types Destination Canada focuses on in marketing the country, the third is described as a Free Spirit, people who are highly social, open-minded, experimental and adventurous who love trendy, high-end, uncomplicated travel with a variety of experiences. Destination BC has purchased access to the Explorer Quotient research and it is available for free for any business or community to use in developing, delivering and promoting tourism.

3.1 The Route Travelled

Arriving into the Fort St. John Airport, we travelled south via Dawson Creek as this is the main route of the Alaska Highway and the route that thousands of travellers take each year, then looped back through Chetwynd and Hudson's Hope.

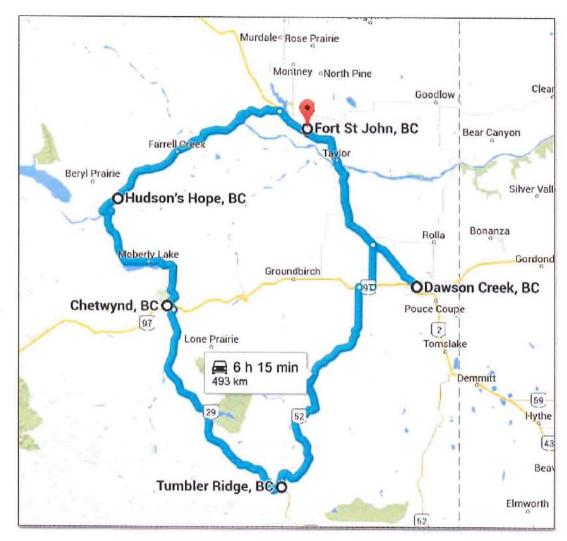
We had also visited the WC Bennet dam on a previous visit to Northern BC, and seen the statues in Chetwynd, so wanted to get to town quickly.

That however was not what was recommended by the incredibly helpful gentlemen at the Avis Rent-a-Car who were full of information about Tumbler Ridge and reasons to visit.

The route from Fort St. John through Hudson Hope to Tumbler Ridge is the most scenic.

They suggested traveling the Hudson's Hope route for the amazing view, and one that will be permanently altered with the Site C dam development; so it 'may be our last chance'. We opted to stick to our plans and the same recommendation came from the Taylor VIC - so much so, she said turn back an enjoy the ride!

Too bad that insight and option isn't on the on line trip planning information for Tumbler Ridge to help visitors know how to enjoy their journey!



3.2 The Journey to Tumbler Ridge

The pre-trip research for Tumbler Ridge confirmed this is a place to discover dinosaurs and hike, it did not provide enough insight on the Global Geopark for that to influence travel plans or purchase decisions.

Based on the online-search of three different individuals, and a careful review of TripAdvisor (TA), we identified the things to do and places to eat while in town. Three activities made the 'must do' list as priorities, all others we anticipated getting more information from Visitor Information Centres and recommendations from locals once in town.

| Peaked Curiosity and Held Appeal Based on Online Research | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Food & Beverage | Dragon Place Tumbler Inn Restaurant Duck Stop Sandwich Stop & Cafe Western Steakhouse Coal Bin Pub | | |
| Activities Considered ** Priority activities | Kinuseo Falls - the most recommended activity promoted Dinosaur tour Tumbler Ridge Museum Hiking in general — but it was difficult to decide which trails to take, so Trip Advisor led to the: Flatbed Dinosaur Trackway Quality Falls Hiking Trail Monkman Provincial Park Bergeron Falls Tumbler Point Hiking Trail Wapiti Lake Provincial Park Dearhole Lake Provincial Park & Protected Area Hole in the Wall Provincial Park Tumbler Ridge Golf & Country Club | | |



3.3 What We Actually Did

| (TA = TripAdvisor Rating | Actual # = Trail Map available at multiple information places) | Considered but passed on this visit | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Friday Sept 4th: Arriving from Fort St. Johns/ Dawson Creek | Wolverine Lantern Tour - \$12 tour (discounted to \$10 because of B&B referral) | #10 Murray Canyon Overlook - no warning for the sign to stop or turn around #9 Quality Falls - no warning for the sign to stop | |
| Saturday Sept 5th: Visit the town, stores & get oriented in case everything closed for the long weekend | Dinosaur Discovery Centre - \$8 fee (free from B&B coupon) Tumbler Ridge Museum/Community Centre (TA 4.5*) Visitor Information Centre BC Rail Train Walked the entire village, visited all the stores Wolverine Tour- \$15 Tour | The Duck Stop Sandwich Stop & Cafe (3*) Closed | |
| Sunday Sept 6th: Discovery/hiking day | #30 Kinuseo Falls (TA 5*) Kinuseo Campground #28 Stone Corral #5 The Bald Spot | Tried for the Wild River Boat Tour - minimum 4 needed, tour didn't operate this day #32 & #33 Monkman Provincial Park (3.5*) — minimum 2-6 day to enjoy and need camping gear #4 Tumbler Point Hiking Trail (4.5*) — no time for both, locals and VIC recommended Baldspot if you could only do one | |
| Monday, Sept 7th: Discovery/hiking day | Wild River Adventures Tour of the Shipyard (\$200 pp) #9 Quality Falls Hiking Trail (TA 5*) Lion's Campground Monkman RV Park | #34 Babcock Falls & #35 Boulder Gardens if we would have gone our own | |
| Tuesday, Sept 8th: Return to Fort St. John via Chetwynd & Hudson Hope | #14 Bullmoose Marshes, Sora & Bittern Trails (TA 5*) Gwillim Lake & Campground | #9 Beregon Falls & Cliffs - road looked risky for our car, opted not, couldn't find the walking trail up. | |

3.4 We Enjoyed the Journey

A well signed route gave the confidence we were on the route along what turned out to be a very picturesque route with some unexpected surprises. It would have been great if we would have been able to learn more enroute.



Would love to know the story behind the wall!

The first surprise was a fascinating graffiti wall that caused us to stop, read and take photos. We wondered if it may be the longest graffiti wall story in BC! A google search (wifi worked, great) didn't reveal anything about it but it set us up for thinking: "We are going somewhere different'.



Excellent way finding from Dawson Creek.

Our next surprise was the unexpected windmill farm and we began looking to see if there would be a tour to we could learn more, as there isn't in Dawson Creek and we are extremely curious about this amazing green technology. Once in Tumbler Ridge we learned there were no tours, no links to the Geopark - which recognizes natural resources. This is an opportunity waiting to be developed.

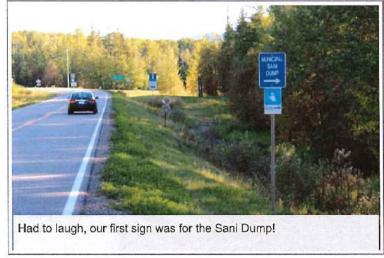
The one disappointment was missing the Murray Canyon Overlook and Tepee Falls trail signs. There wasn't enough time to stop once we saw the sign, we didn't have information yet about the trail, and we weren't sure we were in the 'Global Geopark' so we didn't turn around. Sadly, once we arrived in town, the locals confirmed we should have stopped! (See Chapter 5, Opportunity #5).



WOW! I hope there is a Geopark tour of the windmills.

3.5 The Feeling Upon Arrival: Confused









Arriving into a UNESCO Global Geopark we anticipated some form of 'arrival'. We were greeted with the main welcome to Tumbler Ridge sign, confirming we were in the right place, but from then on it became very confusing. Rather than find the Global Geopark, we found the Municipal Dump, saw old, worn signs of local businesses, a sign confirming COPS on patrol which had us begin to wonder about safety, a Geopark Logo in the ground, confusing museum signs and the list goes one (See Chapter 5, Opportunity #3).

3.6 The Town was a Delightful Surprise

Tumbler Ridge is a picturesque, modern town, with phenomenal amenities. This was unexpected, even knowing that it's BC youngest incorporated town.

As a visitor, once you get passed the arrival signage confusion, you discover a beautiful city centre. The infrastructure is all new and the range and quality of the amenities was more than expected in a town with a population of 2,710.

Several investment challenges that towns often are faced with are already part of the community including:

- Streetscape harmony with light standards, signage, street pole banners, hanging baskets,
- Ample free parking on the streets, designated parking areas and the Visitors Centre;
- Safe pedestrian walking areas, cross walks including access; and the sense of patriotism with Canadian flags in multiple locations was fantastic! For international travellers, these become affirmations of place and backdrops for photos.

There is however, nothing at this point to indicate you are in the heart of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark. But, the designation is new and investments in branding will need to occur for the town and tourism. (See Chapter 5, Opportunity #6).







3.7 Terrific Recreational Facilities

Within the Town of Tumbler Ridge and the Lions's Campground there are excellent and surprising number of recreational facilities, albeit some are a little run down.

The pre-arrival information search doesn't give visitors enough information on the range of facilities to expect, which for those who do not want to hike, creates a different set of opportunities to enjoy the town.











3.8 Trying to Find the Museum was Extremely Frustrating

DINOSAUR

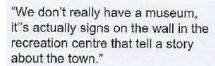
DISCOVERY

GALLERY

There is huge confusion in the literature, signage, and advice from locals regarding the museum, dinosaur gallery, and community centre — all of which visitors arrive with preconceived notions of what these should be.

As a traveller you are led to believe there are three distinct entities but you never really know.

- The Dinosaur Discover Gallery is also called the museum by some, because it has exhibits;
- The community centre is also called
 a museum by some, as it has exhibits on the wall, but others call the community centre the recreation centre for if you aren't using the library or
 small meeting rooms, the majority of the assets are recreational, including the adjacent skatepark;
- · We couldn't find a building that actually was called a museum;
- · The BC Trail train was identified as the museum, but its sign says it is an exhibit; and
- · Ask a local and here's what they say:



"The Dinosaur Gallery thinks it is a museum because of the exhibits, but it's really a research station."

"We don't have a museum, just the Dinosaur Centre, the Train, and some great history on the walls of the community centre."

"Yah, we get asked that all the time by tourists who are totally confused. We don't actually have a museum."

the community centre the recreation centre for if your including the adjacent skatepark;



Add to the confusion the Northern BC Tumbler Ridge marketing material that first raise our awareness of the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre, which you then learn is in the Discovery Centre. There is no mention of a museum in the 2015 Northern BC Travel Guide, and the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation website, under construction has a map of the town and speaks to the geographical history of the region and the Global Geopark! You still can't find a museum!

The simple words to describe the experience: Frustrating, confusing, and a waste of time trying to find a museum that doesn't exist. Yet, each of the various assets, if accurately described to visitors, with town signage and marketing collateral (print and online) to match, would be helpful.

Dinosaur Discovery Centre Visitor Experience

- A one room, professional Gallery with static display information targeted to scientists or palaeontology specialists which may limit the readability for general audiences without an accompanying brochure or information tool;
- The main visitor dinosaur interpretation offers a traditional opportunity to look, see and read. There is no interactivity, tactical engagement, opportunities to engage with the story, connect with the research or immerse in this fascinating discovery. This is a missed opportunity, especially for families with children who are naturally attracted to 'dinosaurs' and it could generate enhanced revenues;
- The lack of hands-on, interactive exhibits and programs in the Centre was a surprise given the topic. There was no place for children to 'play and discover' either independently or via programs targeted for them. Adult programming was also missing for those who would want to learn about the research, or gain insight into the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre. Special behind-the-scenes tours, meet the scientists, discover artefacts would increase the engagement and relevance to visitors. The impact: One visit is sufficient, there is no need to return, no opportunity for auxiliary revenue generation. Hearing guests with age children moan 'this is boring' and armed with their mobile devices needs to be addressed;







- The theatre offers the ability 'listen, watch and learn' but as one mother, with two teenaged children said, "There are so many videos to choose from, you can waste all day figuring it out and it would take all day inside to listen to them." In fact, there are six categories. The Global Geopark attractions have 20 videos, ranging in length from 1.5 to 4 minutes, Tumbler Ridge has 4 videos ranging in length from 3 to 16 minutes, and we witnessed guest pushing buttons and walking away as the choice, like the hiking brochures, was overwhelming. Like the print information overwhelming vs. engaging;
- Three pay-for-play off-site dinosaur programs did exist; two of the three we tried were excellent, but similar in content do evolving program
 topics and themes is an opportunity; and
- Eliminate any further references to calling it a museum. It is a gallery and research station that's ok! If interactive engagement becomes
 part of the venue's future, the term Discovery Centre would live up to its name.





The Community Centre

- Is actually more of a recreation centre from a visitors perspective because of the pool, rink, skateboard park, and indoor climbing gym. These are appealing features for some travellers, especially those we encountered in the Lion's Campground.
- Finding historical exhibits in such a place is not common, and it doesn't fit the perception of a 'museum'. Plus, upon arrival there is no information on how to 'read the walls', what the numbers mean, no one to invite you to discover the history of Tumbler Ridge. It actually is quite fascinating but as a traveller you don't think to look here, have no idea what the numbers mean, how long you should budget your time to enjoy reading.



The BC Trail Train

- This is the closest asset to a 'museum' however, the visitor experience is a quick walk through, read, and depart. There is no engagement, beyond the opportunity to climb up interaction, revenue generation, just a lovely historical asset.
- · This is a significant element of confusion that can be easily addressed.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunity #3).

3.9 The Trails Are Amazing

Arriving in Tumbler Ridge we had an awareness there were 'lots of trails and waterfalls' — which there were but we had no idea of the range, diversity and quality that we would discover. While the name 'Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society' didn't mean much to us coming into town, it is an organization we will rave about for years to come for their amazing contribution to community and visitor experience.

As a hiker who has been on many Parks Canada trails that are poorly marked with limited information, it was greatly appreciated to have trail maps at the trail heads in case you didn't have one. Some trails had orienteering markers that matched the brochure (Stone Corral) which slowed us down to look, read and learn, which mixed up the experience. And while the way finding and trail indicators differed we came to trust that there would be one to ensure we were in the right place.



Map boxes at the start of the trail
— thanks this is great!

We observed they are not harmonized, nor branded to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark to further emphasize place and affirmation 'you are in the geopark' but know that signage is expensive, is added organically, and appreciated immensely the efforts for what was provided. It showed a place that was cared for and it gave you confidence in the safety of the trails.



Orienteering markers that match the trail map.







The signs differ, but all trails we tried were well marked.

Trail Interpretation Varied

The trail interpretation varied considerably, the signage was again quite eclectic, and it was evident different organizations sponsored different signage projects as a result of the multitude of logos. We came to look for the Geopark for 'affirmation we were at a Geopark Trail.' The Town logo was quite prominent but we had no idea what the TRMF was until we returned to our hotel at the end of the day and googled it. We then also wondered what the Museum Foundation had to do with the trails and we wondered what the logo of a waterfall represented, did it designate this as a waterfall trail? Finally, we eventually learned from talking to people that once we were in the provincial park the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society was no longer involved.



BC Parks signage with partner logos.



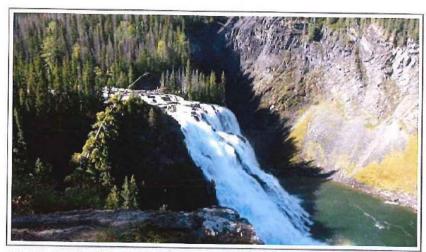
Not sure why the second logo is there?

The Views Are Spectacular

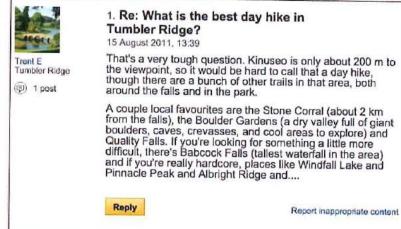
The views are spectacular and truly some of the best kept secrets in British Columbia. The #1 recommended trail by all sources is the Kinuseo Falls, it also comes with the most recommendations to expect a flat tire as the road is filled with potholes that can sink your car! The poor quality of the road is true, but only in places — but the locals put the fear of God in you so you drive carefully which is a good thing. This needs to be on the website at a minimum. Heading up to the Shipyard-Titanic - we were glad we were with a guide, for our little rental could have been in trouble.

As traffic increases, it will be important to advise visitors, on the website about the quality of the driving access to each of the trails to avoid vehicle breakdowns. Noting if cell phones work the further you get from town is important to know, as are the locations and hours of the gas stations.

Quality Falls was beautiful in a different way. We had to choose between Bergeron Falls (#13) and Bergeron Cliffs (#12) over Kinuseo Falls (#30) and in retrospect, as we prefer a fitness hike, by following the Visitor Centre, locals, and Trip Advisor recommendations, we saw the falls, but would have rather spent the time elsewhere. Again - it all ties back to helping the visitor decide! Always Appreciate Washrooms!



Kinuseo Falls - the second largest in Canada next to Niagara Falls, WOW



TripAdvisor Post

Just as the trail and interpretive signage varied, so did the washroom facilities from luxury in the woods, to sketchy — but ok, to none at all and "I wish the guide or brochure would have told us!" While hard core hikers often don't expect any facilities, unless they are in a provincial or national park, the Geopark designation as a UNESCO site could bring some of these expectations, even though there is no federal or provincial organization funding the operations!

Careful consideration will need to be given to the 'easy trails' that are promoted within a close proximity to town for day trippers and people who come to explore, but would be considered 'curious hikers' or 'drop in, I'll give it a try people'. These trails should have composting toilets adjacent if the municipality can manage the maintenance. At a minimum, when the trail maps are updated, providing this information gives visitors a heads up!



Luxury in the woods — thanks! It would be great if this info was on the trail maps!



Wasn't sure what it was from the outside — surprise!

The TR Trail would have been great but ...

There was an appealing 27 km hike but only advertised by poster boards once in town, and no complementary information about how a visitor would secure a taxi to return to where they leave their car. It was one of the most recommend activities by locals, although we didn't find anyone who had actually hiked it — rather visited different parts at different times. For visitors from Germany who could be attracted to a Global Geopark, they have a Volksmarch program than offers 10, 20 and 30 km community hikes and this could be appealing.

Enhance the visitor experience by adding this trail to the website as an option and provide the auxiliary information to enjoy the trail — length of time for an avid hiker, taxi phone numbers, and points of interest. This almost guarantees the guest will be in town for an entire day and increases the probability of an overnight accommodation and meals within the town.





Impressed with the Well-Defined Use of Trails











It was evident from arriving into town, where the largest map is about snowmobiling, that this is a reason to visit.

The number of ATVs provide the summer alternative and there were lots of signs indicating where these vehicles could go and not go.

In speaking with locals, it was comforting to know that the designated use of trails is respected by different parties, so as a new hiker, unfamiliar to the area, there should be no collisions or surprises, except perhaps a mountain bike on certain trails.

As the popularity of the Geopark grows, this trail separation should be clearly marked on all maps and communicated on the websites.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunities #4 and 5).

3.10 Few Guided Tours Available and the Value for Money Varied

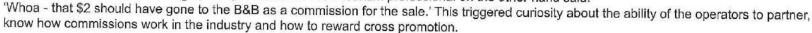
The #1 tour recommended was the Dinosaur Lantern Tour offered by the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery. Two other companies offer tours: Wild River Adventures and Ridge Rotors Helicopter Services.

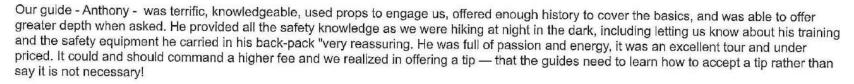
Beyond the Tumbler Ridge Visitor Centre, there was little knowledge of the availability of tours prior to arriving in town. Once in town, there was no effort to 'up-sell' us at the Visitor Centre to drive business to the local operators. This is a missed opportunity.

We also learned there were no 'guides' for hire unless we were in town during the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society specialty walks. This represents another business opportunity, for some people from away would be willing to pay for a private guide to ensure local area knowledge and safety.

The Dinosaur Discovery Centre Tours

Having heard about the *Wolverine Lantern Tour* in Dawson Creek, we were pleasantly surprised to arrive at Mila's B&B to find out she had phoned ahead, booked us two spots in anticipation we may want to join the tour that evening — but there was no obligation to commit! We took her up on the offer and two hours after arriving in town we were out on the trail for what turned out to be the best of the three paid experiences in town. We even received a discount on the price because of the recommendation. The traveller in me loved it and thought, "Yah, what a deal". The tourism professional on the other hand said:



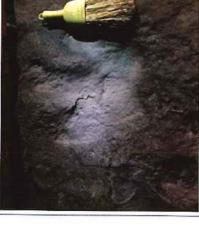


In parting he advised us of the other two tours the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery offers, confirmed the type of 'behind-the scene' opportunity we would have paid for didn't exist, and invited us out on the other tours. Value for money = high. Net promoter score — "Would you recommend to a friend?" (on a scale of 1 to 10). Lantern Tour = 9, TripAdvisor 5; Wolverine Day Tour = 7, TripAdvisor 3.

Future Tips:

- Ensure the three tours offered by the Centre are distinctly different so there is a reason to want to go on all three;
- Provide packaging incentives on cost if you buy two or three of the tours;
- · Review the value proposition of each tour and price accordingly;





- · Learn how to use a commission structure to reward referrals;
- · Encourage guides to accept tips if offered, or if it is not allowed, accept them as donations to the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery;
- · Update the 'what to bring' information for the Lantern Tour to include headlamps or flashlights;
- Reconsider the name "Wolverine Lantern Tour". It was never used by a single person who spoke about it, rather it was the "Dinosaur Lantern Tour" which makes more sense as you find dinosaurs on the tour, not wolverines!
- Access to the Dinosaur Gallery was free because of paying for a tour this needs to be revisited as well in order to build the revenue generation foundation for the Gallery;
- The Gallery: Consider adding behind-the-scenes tours, 'meet the scientist' and other programmatic activities with more hand-on
 interaction so that program fees can be generated and visitors can have a more enriched experience. This will also generate earned
 media and extend the educational mandate from static interpretation to an emotional connection with people and place that travellers
 are seeking.

Opportunities/Considerations for All Tour Operators as the GeoPark Builds Capacity:

- Guide certification or training as a pre-requisite to being a 'certified' Geopark operator. There are different training programs available, and this could be reviewed for what is possible, and most needed. Ensuring guests can keep up with the guide, aren't having challenges, have water breaks, photo stops and time to enjoy, are all elements that need to be considered;
- Risk management. Inquiring about fitness levels, experience, advising on clothing, understanding physical limitations, carrying water, etc. are all important to the operator and the guest experience, especially if the group varies in skills, abilities, health;
- · Consider the introduction of waivers for activities where physical harm may be encountered while on the land with an operator;
- Communications need to be specific to help visitors make informed decisions. For example:
 - · Advertise the skills/abilities for different tours so visitor expectations are aligned with the diversity;
 - · Visitors also need to know about altitude, washrooms, footwear, wildlife, clothing, etc.
 - Length of the tour is important as people make plans to be elsewhere, appreciating there may be variability due to conditions of
 the tour. "Between 4 and 6 hours" is too vague; a 4 hour tour allows for another activities to occur in the day, a 6 hour tour likely
 would fill most travellers day. Plus from an operators perspective, the fee needs to capture their level of effort to be sustainable;
- Opportunities to educate visitors about the Geopark, the flora and fauna, wildlife, and sustainable behaviours should be included in all tours. Visitors will come to a Geopark and want to understand this unique designation;
- Culinary components should practice the highest level of sustainability and visitor comfort, e.g. chairs to sit on after a hike, local fresh
 foods, avoiding glass in nature, recyclable dishes, dining in a place away from the wind for shelter. Consider partnering with food
 providers that source local and homemade;
- World Host training offers immediate and affordable service and entry level courses and become a base level of training for the entire
 community as was done in Georgetown PEI all businesses took the training so they could advertise this as a differentiator;
- Given the small number of operators, secure the funding to invest in 1:1 coaching or small group training, personalized to the needs of
 those currently operating in the community and responsible for growing the tourism experience and revenue associated with tourism.
 Alternatively, the Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (www.gmist.ca) offers Canada's leading experiential travel program that
 communities have sent clusters to, to learn together and return to work on product development.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunities #4, 5 and 8).

3.11 The Safety Messages Were Consistent

People that live in the North, or rural parts of BC and Canada are familiar with wildlife and the cautions that must be taken in nature. This cannot be assumed as the Global Geopark welcomes people from around the world who are not familiar with BC's wildlife. Upon arrival, we inquired about wildlife before embarking on any hiking. We quickly learned that Tumbler Ridge has one the highest densities of grizzly bear populations, and like other northern communities there are black bears, lynx, cougars, and wolves. None of this is conveyed on the Tumbler Ridge or Wolverine Nordic & Mountain Society websites, nor in marketing materials. It should be.

It was impressive however, while speaking to people in the Visitor Centre, our Dinosaur Tour Guide, accommodations hosts and serving staff at restaurants, that the advice was 99% consistent:

- Yes there are bears, and wildlife in the area but there haven't been any dangerous human encounter;
- · Respect their home;
- Yes you should carry bear spray, which is sold at the dollar store or hardware store;
- · Yes bear bells are an option, but some people find them annoying so lots of talking and making noise is an option; and
- Let someone know where you are going the Visitors Centre is a place to leave your name.

Trail signage indicating where to be cautious, when to provide extra supervision for children, and general trail safety was found throughout the Global Geopark. While there was no 'common look and feel' to the signage, it was effective, well placed, helpful, and obvious.













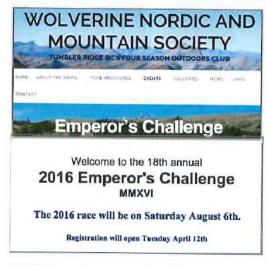


Tumbler Ridge, BC

July 30-31 2016

3.12 A Few Cool Events

One of the most fascinating and untold stories about Tumbler Ridge and the Global Geopark is about the Emperors Challenge. From an event that began in 199 with 36 entries, the toughest half marathon in the world, now attracts 1000 participants and sells out in two days! (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR8rjvuyf0c) and us the largest off-road event in British Columbia! Talk about a story that should be told and an event that could raise profile for visitors about the Geopark! There is a 2013 downloadable map (http://www.emperorschallenge.com/2013/Babcock-Route-Map-2013-with-profile.pdf) on the event website, but it's not clear if you can do the run anytime as a visitor, or if the trail should only be tackled as part of the event. Also as the map is 2013, as a visitor you don't know if the route changes every year.





Growing the notoriety of this event and aligning the marketing messages that this occurs in the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark is highly recommended. The community could also look to host other extreme events such as the Tough Mudder (toughmudder.com) which could extend the appeal to a slightly different, but equally as 'tough' athlete to enjoy the region.

Grizfest is the lead event on the main Tumbler Ridge website, over the Geopark and the year-round reasons to visit which is odd. You immediately click on it only to find out it's an annual event, and in our case, it had past. In speaking to the locals about the event, it is described as:

- "A drunken rock and roll party for youth.";
- "A major party weekend."; or
- "A festival that used to appeal to families but it is a weekend to stay away from town if you have young children."

The website provides very little information, the call to action links to an Encana Events Centre booking page that says, 'no event's and the visitors first entry to Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark has you scratching our head? This raises the flag for those responsible for marketing to ask themselves "What do you want visitors to do when they come?" "If you only get a second click from a traveller when they reach the Tumbler Ridge site, is the GrizFest where you want to direct them to grow tourism in the area?"

(See Chapter 5, Opportunities #4 and 5).

3.13 Retail is Geared to Locals, Not Visitors

There are virtually no invitations to spend money locally in the stores beyond the necessities of food, gas, bear spray, the pharmacy if needed and a trip to the liquor store. A few very standardized gift shop items, limited in choice and quantity, and most of modest quality, are for sale at the Visitor Information Centre and the Dinosaur Discovery Centre. At a destination known for it's hiking it was a surprise to find no retail outlet for hiking gear, poles, clothing or educational products for children and youth related to dinosaurs, waterfalls, and nature.





There is a saying in tourism "The further away, the more they will pay." Visitors travelling long distances to Tumbler Ridge and arriving into Canada's second Global Geopark would likely spend more money if the choice was there. We would have,

This represents an untapped opportunity for an entrepreneur and the Visitor Centre and Dinosaur Discovery Gallery to increase their revenue by carrying more visitor aligned product, adding in local and authentic memorabilia by local area or regional artists made of wood, rock, minerals from the area, and artwork to name a few.

"Come prepared."

During the time in which there isn't any place to buy hiking, rock climbing, fishing or camping supplies, ensure this is communicated so visitors come prepared and make these purchases in other communities prior to their arrival.

Consider expanding the sales function in the Visitor Centre, increasing the inventory at the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery, investing in a line of quality branded Geopark clothing and a product distribution strategy with existing hotels and retailers.

(See Chapter 5, Opportunity #4).

3.14 Window Clutter But They Take Credit Cards!

The overwhelming amount of information in the marketing materials, trail brochures, signage and the number of websites you need to visit to get an understanding of why you should visit Tumbler Ridge continues in town. The number of windows with multiple signs, additional information (beyond the expected hours of operation) just added to 'more to read'. The one good element, was you discovered that credit cards are taken at virtually all establishments which was a plus.

Consider if all the 'window messaging' is really needed. It was just a juxtaposition from the clean, well laid out, centre of town. (See Chapter 5, Opportunity #3).







3.15 Never Expected the Quality and Diversity of Accommodations

There are four accommodation properties in Tumbler Ridge. We stayed in each for one night to experience the differences. Each offers distinctly different space and quality, which provides options to travellers depending on their preference, budgets, space, and social requirements.

Mila's B&B was easy to find and Mila was waiting to greet us on the porch which was terrific! Clean, comfortable, we had a choice or rooms and appreciated the cookies, candies, and travel information. There was tea and pastries in a common area and good internet speed at 10 MB/per second. She provided the highest level of personal touch and local area knowledge.

Friendly and hospitable, she provided the history of the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery. The breakfast, while delicious, we would rate as average compared to other B&Bs. The name confused us for the business is advertised as being the Artful Retreat on TripAdvisor but Mila's B&B elsewhere. It wasn't until arriving we knew for sure they were one and the same. This should be simplified to one name for the business, and she should consider listing her property on Air B&B. Value for money = moderate. Net promoter score — "Would you recommend to a friend?" (on a scale of 1 to 10). Rate 8, TripAdvisor 4.





Tumbler Ridge Inn - a suite with sofa bed.

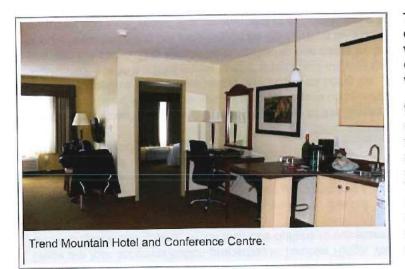
The Tumbler Ridge Inn, the more affordable of the three hotels, made a great first impression as the front desk staff was very welcoming and knowledgable about the area, provided recommendations on how to enjoy the area. She asked about our interests, and highlighted different opportunities.

The room itself lacked plug ins, one of the TV remotes didn't work, the internet was the slowest of the four properties at 0.5 MB/per second, the heating system clanked through the night, but the bed was comfortable and we enjoyed the space and proximity to the city centre. The breakfast included at the Kinuseo Cafe offered a standard bacon and eggs option with prompt, friendly service. The TripAdvisor presence was confusing for the image provided was not of the hotel, rather the town hall. That needs to be changed and investments in targeted room upgrades would enhance the experience. Value for money = moderate. Net promoter score — "Would you recommend to a friend?" (on a scale of 1 to 10) = 6, TripAdvisor 3.

The Wilderness Lodge was the most expensive property, which we had heard from our preinquiries and one Visitor Centre information stop. The arrivals experience was not positive, the signage and directions aren't clear, there was no receptionist, only a phone that led to instructions to find our key under a rock. The walk to the room felt like visiting our son at university, but the room itself was a two-bedroom, well appointed condominium with adequate internet speeds at 2.0 MB/per second. The value for money relative to the room was high and if you just want a place to stay it would be great. Calling the property however a Lodge is misleading for lodges typically have an entire social ambiance, shared space and opportunities to connect with like-interest travellers. It also doesn't feel like a hotel, for there is no service, no tourism information except a booklet at the door, and we never once spoke to anyone face-to-face, even on check-out. Knowing it is a repurposed mine accommodations building, they would do well by advertising it as an efficiency unit and preparing the guest for the lack of interaction — and for some, that would be a positive due to the complete privacy. Every traveller is different. Value for money = high. Net promoter score — "Would you recommend to a friend?" (on a scale of 1 to 10) = 4, TripAdvisor 3.



Wilderness Lodge Hotel - a strange combination of an amazing room, but it felt like a university residence.



The Trend Mountain Hotel was friendly and efficient, as one would expect when entering a branded hotel in a major city. Professional and businesslike, our host was able to provide interesting reflections on the community and how it had changed when we asked about the property. Well signed, it was easy to find with ample parking.

We booked into this room the last night knowing we would want to begin to upload photos, reconnect with people back home, and relax after days of touring. It was a good decision. This property had the highest level of quality and amenities, 2.0 MB/per second of Internet speed, a wonderful jacuzzi, ample space to separate plug in electronics, plus the adjacent Western Steakhouse. The breakfast was modest; more than a Comfort Inn but less than the Pomeroy northern chain. As a conference venue it would be excellent for the rooms are spacious and provide amble space for networking, and within walking distance to the city centre. Value for money = high. Net promoter score — "Would you recommend to a friend?" (on a scale of 1 to 10) = 9, TripAdvisor 5.

3.16 A Different Vibe Between the Campgrounds & RV Park

Three sites within the townsite of Tumbler Ridge and two in the Geopark region were visited. They offer distinctly different amenities, sense of community, and ambiance. The most unexpected find was the few camping spots at the golf course. The Monkman RV Park had a barren feeling, the playground area was older, and there was no 'action' during the long weekend to get a sense of the experience. The Lion's Campground was hopping! Full of amenities, proximity to the river, a broad demographic and people in tents, trailers, and RVs alike. In speaking with guests at the different locations (except Gwilliam as there was no one there), the common sentiment was that Lion's Campground is the preferred location because "It is fun." "It's a campground in the Peace Region for families." "Its close to the recreational facilities in town." "If you want to go fishing and swim in the lake — then you go to Gwilliam." Prices are extremely affordable ranging from \$16 to \$27/night.



Lion's Campground - the most amenities and sense of community.



Monk RV Park, barren feeling.



Gorgeous views at Gwilliam Lake.



Surprised to find camping in a golf course parking lot!



Monkman Provincial Park.

3.17 More Dining Options than Expected for a Small Rural Town

TripAdvisor listed four restaurants and only the Dragon Palace had a four-star rating so we weren't expecting much for dining, three we tried. The Dragon Palace lived up to its reputation and the locals raved about it the most. The Western Steakhouse provided a traditional pub-style/sports-bar ambiance, and the Kinuseo Cafe appeared to have its menu set for the local community.

We were shocked and delighted to find that our first stop — the Action Play Cafe - served local, home cooked food, cooked daily and you could place orders for hiking lunches, and the service was fast and friendly! What a hidden treasure. It should be advertised for a recreation/community centre cafeterias is not a place, as a traveller, we would look for a healthy meal! They should also be on TripAdvisor for, along with the Dragon Palace, they were the only dining experience that would have received a 5-star rating.

The menus were vast at all the restaurants offering choice and variety, but there were no culinary specials, local foods, or any dining experiences unique to the region that could differentiate or draw guests specifically.

Vegetarians would survive in Tumbler Ridge and the grocery store provides all the basics for people wanting to stock up for their campsite, their hotel suite, or load up a backpack for hiking.

Overall the service was fast, friendly, but few had the ability to recommend things to do for visitors. There is an untapped opportunity to ensure the wait staff at all the restaurants are tourism ambassadors and can convey more than 'check out the Visitor's Centre'.

"The best place to eat and get real, healthy food is the Action Cafe; they'll even make you a trail pack. We totally lucked into finding it because you'd never think of a good meal from a rec centre."

Two hikers in their 40s in the grocery store

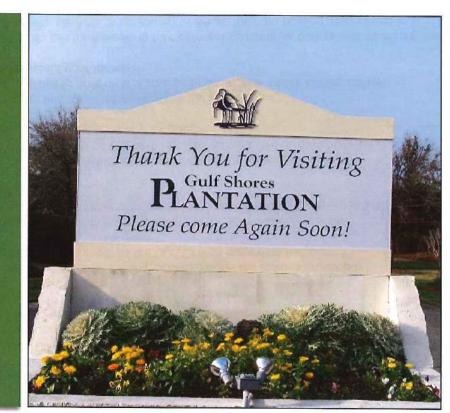


Home cooked healthy food in a community/recreation centre at the Action Play Cafe. Too bad it's not advertised!





4. The Post Community Experience: Discoveries & Suggestions



"What you do, is not nearly as important as how it makes people feel."

Seth Godin Online Marketing Guru

4. The Post-Visitor Experience

In today's world of social media, where visitors can, and many will continue to tell their story after their vacation, the importance of proactively managing the post-visitor experience to some degree, is vital.

Here is where there is significant work to be done.

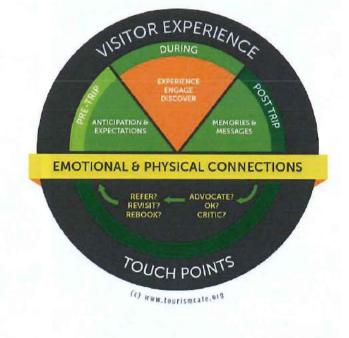
Of all the places visited, all the properties stayed at, all the restaurants dined at, the invitation for me to connect, reconnect, and tell my story online was non-existent, with the exception of Wild River Adventures who asked to take our photo and invited us to post on their Facebook page.

Plus, there was no 'thanks for visiting' sign as we left the town in any or any message to 'Come again soon' as the Gulf Shores plantation has done.

There is a real opportunity to invite guests to share their stories, post on TripAdvisor, upload their favourite photo to Pinterest or Instagram - even win a 'prize' for the best.

But first you have to know which channels they are using, and this is easily done with a pen and paper by the cash register, an excel file on the computer and asking two simple questions of your guests:

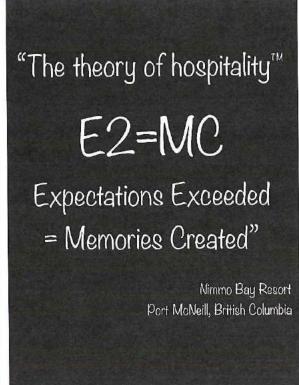
- 1. Where to go to find travel information on the internet?
- 2. Where do you like to post on line your pictures, videos and/or stories online to tell others about your travels?



Ask your staff to do this for a week, in four different seasons (or during their operating season) and discover where your customers are online. Don't leave it to chance. And, once you know where they are posting, invite them to your sites such as TripAdvisor, Facebook, Instagram, a trail blog, then mine their contributions for photos and videos and to learn what they love about your business and destination and where you could improve, change, or modify.

5. Opportunities & Investments





A Small Town with a BIG Opportunity

This report has presented the details of analysis of the visitor experience assessment in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. While several tips, suggestions, and ideas have been interspersed throughout these chapters, the purpose of this final chapter is to summarize the broad categories to focus on moving forward.

Like any destination and business, there are excellent activities going on, elements to be tweaked, and areas where significant improvement is required to increase the appeal of the community to more visitors and grow tourism beyond the local and regional market. We fully appreciate that parts of this report may have pushed some sensitivity buttons, which we respect and understand. The goal however is to provide a foundation of information to help focus investment and build on the phenomenal opportunity ahead.

Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, for the right visitors, has the potential to become an iconic attraction. It is one of British Columbia's best kept secrets, and as traveller types that could be defined as 'your ideal' guests we will rave about the beauty, people, place, and visitor opportunities.

Each visitor to your community will come with preconceptions and have the Internet as their storyboard to permanently contribute their Tumbler Ridge Geopark experience, in print, video, images, and audio. Every incremental step forward, together, will contribute to the long-term future for tourism.

It is our hope this document becomes a springboard for discussion, reflection, and targeted action. Tumbler Ridge, for the right customers, has phenomenal potential. It is one of British Columbia's best kept secrets, and as traveller types that could be defined as 'your ideal' guests we will rave about the beauty, people, place, and visitor opportunities. We heard from the local population that it is important for tourism to grow given the closure of the major mines. The visitor experience at this point is raw and targeted development should increase the direct and indirect benefits.

Tumbler Ridge as Canada's second Global Geopark has the potential to become a new iconic attraction in Northern BC, the province and Canada

Focus on the Future

It is evident that a tremendous amount of community passion, volunteer contribution, municipal and funding partner support has led to Tumbler Ridge being recognized as a Global Geopark. This in itself is a tourism success story. However, with a UNESCO designation, comes international visitor expectations, development opportunities, and challenges, some anticipated and unanticipated outcomes.

Eight aggregate opportunities emerged from this project. Celebrating the past and how business has been done — got you here. *The future lies now in shifting to a customer focus, aligning efforts, investment, sharing customers, and taking incremental steps forward as a community*. Some will directly impact your business, others will support members in the community and surrounding Geopark areas. Together however they will contribute to the long-term future for tourism and a contribution to the community.

Opportunity #1: Target Investments In Training And Capacity Building Carefully And Purposefully

Securing Global Geopark status is something for all British Columbians to truly be proud of. It can also raise the bar on visitor expectations while simultaneously creating new business opportunities. Investing in targeted training, specific to supporting your current businesses so they become stronger and more successful is vital. This assessment highlights several areas where investing in your businesses could generate 'quick wins' and set the foundation for growth. Examples include:

Determine and Focus Your Ideal Guests:

Determine who are your 'ideal guests' then target your experience and destination development investments to appeal to this/these traveller types.

 Destination BC has made access to this award winning, national and international Explorer Quotient research available to BC businesses, however the stakeholders have to invest in the training.⁶







Product and Market Development:

Imperative to growing the benefits from tourism is enhancing and diversifying the visitor experience. This includes designing experiences that respond to what travellers are seeking relative to products they can buy directly from a tourism business, but also understanding the broader visitor experience of the community and geopark for the many that will come for self discovery of the trails, town, and waterfalls.

- · Understanding how the tourism industry works;
- Product development and visitor experience training for all private, public, and not-for-profit operators, and the visitor servicing team;
- · World Host customer service training for all businesses that interface with visitors.

Marketing:

Invest in building the Geopark brand aligned with Tumbler Ridge.

- Invest in social media, storytelling, and content creation/production training;
- · Define an editorial strategy each year and ensure it supports larger business goals; and
- Develop content 'owners' for Tumbler Ridge digital properties who are trained in brand storytelling.

The Northern BC Tourism Association would be an ideal place to begin these discussions for they carry the expertise, and networks to secure support. Avoid however investing in 'general workshops' — you need to make progress. Small group, 1:1, online, and face-to-face training all provide personalized approaches and could provide opportunities to help businesses over the winter months prepare for the summer of 2016 and Canada's 150th celebrations in 2017.

⁶ Authorized trainers can be hired to come into communities and offer workshops or personalized coaching, helping fast-track and target investment based on solid consumer research. As well, there are lots of free tools for those who have the desire to train themselves! http://en.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Resources/ctc_eq_profiles_2012-eng-lowres.pdf

Opportunity #2: Think About The Visitor Journey — Prepare Them For What Is And Is Not Available

Travel, particularly in northern, rural, and remote places is as much about the journey as the destination. Your challenge is not about just attracting visitors to Tumbler Ridge, it is about becoming a 'must stop part of a journey' for travellers heading to the Yukon, travelling the Alaska Highway, or driving a circle route through British Columbia.

Your goal for these travellers is to be on the bucket list! To do so, you not only need more 'reasons to visit' addressed in Opportunity #4, you also have to provide travellers with information about the journey including:

- Points of interest with GPS points so travellers know 'its coming up' and don't drive by (with an RV you won't turn around) — e.g. the Murray's Canyon Overlook;
- Are there opportunities to hook up with 'like-interest' people — e.g. ATV'ers, snowmobilers, RV'ers - where do they hang out?
- · Basic driving information including:
 - Which vehicles are recommended for which trails (e.g. Shipyard Titanic is not a good idea in a Smart Car or compact)!
 - Which roads have pull-overs;
 - · Where and when can you get gas, vehicle repairs, tires, and wind screens replaced (all sources of revenue for businesses);
 - · Where is there cell service, and which providers work 'up there' (e.g. Telus, Bell, Rogers, AT&T);
 - · Hours of Visitor Centers along the way;
 - · Driving conditions, weather apps;
 - · What can you buy in town and what do you have to bring: and
 - · More information than the number of the highway to get to town.
- · Where is there a public laundry matt, showers, campgrounds; and
- · Suggested routes, ensuring options that optimize time of day to encourage overnight visitation!

Just as important as preparing the visitor for what is on the journey, be honest and transparent about what is not. You will be thanked for this versus criticized. If you know a service or store is not available, you come prepared. Create the journey and post it online!



Opportunity #3: Get Creative —Enhance The Visitor Experience To Generate New Revenue And Destination Appeal

The current visitor experience in the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark is mostly self-discovery, be that on foot, ATV, snowmobile or driving around the defined area. This will always be an essential and integral element of your tourism mix. However, in order for businesses and the town of Tumbler Ridge to derive increased direct, indirect, and induced effects from tourism7 the community needs to become the 'hub' for visitors to stay and enjoy themselves, moving through the region, but returning to Tumbler Ridge at night, rather than moving on to Chetwynd or Dawson Creek.

The visitor observations from this assessment provide plenty of insights that can launch the conversation, and ultimately lead to new/enhanced product development, aligned with new markets you wish to develop (Figure 4).

It is important that this take a major focus on revenue generating visitor experiences to layer on new opportunity to all the non-revenue generating assets (trails, lakes, rivers, etc.). Currently there is very little for visitors to spend their money on!

While beyond the scope of a visitor assessment, some preliminary ideas focus on strengthening existing businesses. Here are some top-of-mind ideas that emerged while visiting the community. The goal would be to have one or two iconic experiences that appeal to different visitor types to enhance the overall appeal of the destination and generate new revenue.

The Dinosaur Discovery Gallery should be a mecca for dynamic, on-going fee-forservice programming that appeals to a wide range of visitors and becomes an iconic attractor for first time guests and a reason to revisit for existing travellers to Tumbler Ridge. Experiential travel programming that generates value-added revenues that contribute to the visitor experience and sustainability of the gallery is needed. This type

EXPERIENCE of tourism product focuses on raising the bar above standard 'look see' tourism and basic interpretation programs (1 hour, provision of information) and put the traveller in charge of their learning, discover, and the guide shifts from being the 'sage on the stage 'to the guide on

the side'. The preliminary programs and summer camp are a great start, combined but with some creativity, there could be so much more. For example:

- Behind the Scenes Tours;
- Palaeontologist for a day or a weekend, Meet the Scientist;
- Dino Digs and Rock Hounds, Dinosaur Hunts, Trail Cam programs,
- Interactive exhibits, and a children's exploration area to name a few.

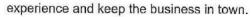
Figure 4: The Value of Visitor Insights



⁷ Direct impact: visitor pays for activities, recreation, accommodations, transportation, etc. Indirect impact pays for the buildings, salaries, communications and other business costs. Induced effect: generated from tax revenues, business growth, community appeal, etc.

- Explore starting a Community Host Program similar to the one created by the ShoreFast Foundation on Fogo Island in Newfoundland (http://shorefast.org/our-projects/geology-initiatives/). The program was designed in partnership with the internationally acclaimed Fogo Island Inn (http://fogoislandinn.ca/), located 6 hours from St. Johns NL, on an island with a population of 2,700 similar to Tumbler Ridge. This program pairs up local citizens, for a fee, for personalize tours with visitors and is operated through the not-for-profit foundation.
- Get creative and take a problem and turn it into a revenue generating solution and an iconic visitor experience! The most promoted visitor experience is a visit to Kinuseo Falls, and they are spectacular, and provide great fodder for marketing. However, the road is dreadful, you are advised to 'be prepared to blow a tire', and it's a long drive to look at a waterfall! Rather than invest \$20 to \$30 million in road upgrades to drive more people to a non-revenue generating attraction, invest in a special type of transportation that is housed in Tumbler Ridge. A specialty vehicle could become the 'adventure transportation' out to Kinuseo Falls that involves travel on some 'cool type' of transportation (one business benefits), includes a lunch (2nd business benefits), involves a guide (3rd benefactor), and could be packaged with hotels (4th benefactor) as a start!
 - The Brewster Snow-coach in Alberta charges \$54.95 for a glacier adventure — and you quite literally travel across the highway and down a slope several hundred meters, and have an experience driving on the ice. This is designed for volume, Tumbler Ridge wouldn't have the visitor flows so size, scale, etc would need to be considered, but this way the business is in Tumbler Ridge, and even campers, day-trippers, motor-coach travellers, all could forego ruining their tires, enjoy a shared

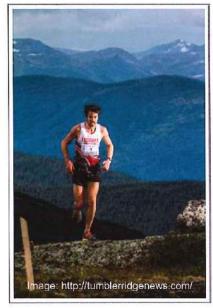






• A second example of a specialty vehicle is the tundra buggies in Churchill Manitoba. Day tours to see the polar bears currently sell for \$179 per adult/ senior, children 12 and under \$139. On different days, the coach could go to other places in the park where leisure vehicles are at risk, to create reasons to revisit, repurchase, and have more fun. Imagine a tour of the Wind Farm on different days — would that create a reason to stay one or two nights? Imagine if this leading edge environmental company would be willing to invest part of their education budget to telling their story? Gaining positive marketing and community profile by contributing, or sponsoring this specialty vehicle?

- Build on Success: The Emperors Challenge is an amazing success story that a niche market knows about, loves and no doubt has an amazing experience each year. What other events, tied to niche markets such as:
 - Tough Mudders (<u>https://toughmudder.com</u>) for crazy fun people!
 - An Extreme Triathlon (http://decaironman-training.com/2013/11/23/10-extreme-triathlons-you-can-train-for-athletelab/) for the ultimate athlete;
 - Quad-a-palooza event (http://www.destinationgander.com/events/quad-a-palooza) for ATVer's
 - · Labrador's Cain's Quest snowmobile endurance race (http://cainsquest.com/); or
 - Storm the Fortress at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site (http://www.fortressoflouisbourg.ca/stormthefortress) for the motorcycle crowd!
- Foster Win-Win Partnerships: The Bonne Bay Marine Station (http://www.bonnebay.ca/Pages/interactive.aspx), an arm of Memorial University, partners with community businesses such as Bonne Tours (http://www.bontours.ca/tour/discovery-tour/), to make their teaching and research facilities more accessible to the public, create greater links and relevance to the community and generate revenue for the research station by offering revenue generating visitor experiences.



Essential to succeeding with these types of experiences is knowing the customer. Destination British
Columbia has recently purchased the rights for any BC tourism business to gain access to Destination Canada's award winning Explorer quotient research. This provides profile information on the nine traveller types to and within Canada, demographic and psychographic information, and tremendous insight into product development, promotions, pricing, etc. Authorized trainers can be hired to come into communities and offer workshops or personalized coaching, helping fast-track and target investment based on solid consumer research. As well, there are lots of free tools for those who have the desire to train themselves!⁸

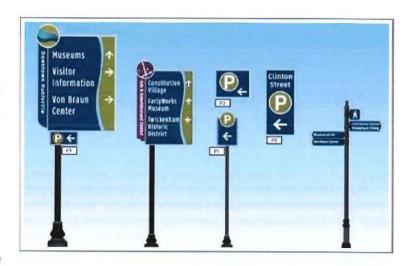
⁸ http://en.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Resources/ctc_eq_profiles_2012-eng-lowres.pdf



Opportunity #4: Improve the Sense Place Upon Arrival, Departure, And Invest In Community Way Finding

Once you attract a visitor to the community, and they enjoy the journey, make sure they can find their way around town. Section 3.5 presented evidence of the poor quality way-finding and section 3.8 addressed the name confusion with the museum on signs. You only have a visitor for a precious short period of time — make it easy for them to find their way around, direct them clearly to the town services, and visitor opportunities. The beautiful town centre is a real treat and an unexpected surprise — invest in new, harmonized way finding, remove old signs, and extend the city centre visual pride to the roads.

Remember, the visitor experience has a before, during, and after element. The sense of arrival into the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark should be just as wonderful as the 'thank you for visiting, come again' departing message. These signs not only become part of the brand identity, let the visitor know they have arrived, they can become iconic photo stops for visitors to anchor their memories and post online 'I'm in Tumbler Ridge' — so placement is critical. Dawson Creek has the start of the Alaska Highway and the Vegas sign is one of the most photographed in the world.



How do you want visitors to remember and share their sense of arrival to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark?





Opportunity #5: Simplify And Remove The Confusion With The Overwhelming Amount Of Information

Three distinct visitor groups were identified through conversations with other travellers during the assessment:

- Regular visitors who come frequently to hike, camp, fish, or enjoy other recreational activities. They love the region and are the bedrock of your return visitation;
- Occasional visitors who will revisit your community, but are not committed to any type of 'regular' visitation schedule; and
- 3) First-time curiosity seekers venturing south from Chetwynd on Highway 29, or from Dawson Creek via Highway 52. This is where your growth potential exists, and during the early years of your Geopark designation, and depending on their experience, could become repeat guests.

For new visitors, the sheer volume of print information combined with the number of websites that carry part of the story, some of the visitor information, and challenging calls to action is surprising for a small town.(e.g. WNMS, TRMF, TRGG, TR, PRPRC, BC Parks, Destination BC/Northern BC Tourism Association). This is actually a deterrent to the actual visitor experience. Section 2.2 and 2.3 provides details on specific improvements that can be addressed for the next marketing cycle, print cycle, and updates to your online presence. Keep in mind, this is about the visitor and:

- Put the visitor experience first when writing for the web. Identify 3-4 key
 messages per page and use photography and video to tell the story, inform
 visitors and inspire them to visit;
- Keep the mobile experience top of mind; limit text, keep page design simple, ensure directions, contacts, and maps are quickly accessible. Offer longer 'narratives' as an option for the visitor and not a requirement; and
- Imagine the worst-case scenario of a visitor being lost—what do they need right now to help them? Make sure you print information and main Tumbler Ridge website can support the needs of your visitors.

"We love coming to Tumbler Ridge. There is so much to do in such a small town for kids and when they are happy, we are happy. This campground [Lions] is great, you can explore for dinosaurs every year, and lots of hikes to pick from."

Two ladies supervising children at the Lions Campground

"We retired to Tumbler Ridge and we love it; so do our children. They visit often because they love the trails, the community is safe, and we have everything, more than everything a small town has in other places."

Couple dining in a restaurant

"We are only here for two days. There is so much to do, we can't decide. I'm afraid we'll end up doing nothing for half a day trying to figure out what fits our family. If you ask someone, they just give you more information!"

Kamioops mom with two teen children



Opportunity #6: Develop A Brand That Optimizes The Unique Geopark Designation And Aligns with Destination BC

The importance of a strong brand presence that builds on the new Global Geopark designation for Tumbler Ridge cannot be overstated. Overwhelmingly few people we encountered enroute and in town could really explain why Tumbler Ridge is a geopark, but they did share the designation was 'fast-tracked' due to the mine closure and a need for tourism to become a stronger economic driver for the community. Aligned with Destination BC, a well developed brand and a strong story that incorporates the geological bounty of the area — past and present — shaping this in the minds of the consumer should be a strategic priority for the digital and traditional marketing presence of this destination. This will help to:

- Harmonize the marketing investments in going forward;
- · Differentiate yourself from all other municipalities in British Columbia and leverage the credibility of the Global Geopark designation;
- · Establish tone and voice, common look and feel, brand pillars, and visual identity guidelines;
- Help attract the ideal guests to your destination who value the assets and attributed of Tumbler Ridge and the Global Geopark;
- · Add clarity in what the visitor opportunity is in the minds of travellers, businesses, and the community; and
- Align stakeholders so their investments in promoting the town, business, and tourism work together to gain critical mass.

Given the organic growth of so many different organizations contributing to "What makes Tumbler Ridge special" it is important now to shift the focus to the consumer in a way that starts to leverage the good work that brought you to this point and take it forward. Essential to this is where, when and who gets to use the Geopark logo with the business and the association/affiliation/statement of credibility this brings aligned wit the brand.

Opportunity #7: Develop The Brand Story That Connects Emotionally And Differentiate sYou In The Marketplace

Are dinosaurs more important than the land they roamed on and the geological formations that shape the region? Is the town of Tumbler Ridge's history and evolution the reason travellers would flock to the town? At the end of the day, it's not about the 'stuff you have' ... it's about the 'story' that will differentiate you in the marketplace. A strong brand story is needed in Tumbler Ridge to shift from a current focus of different organizations telling 'their story' within a community to a new story that will:

- · Inspire feelings and connect emotionally with travellers about the destination;
- · Become the catalyst for building customer perception and loyalty;
- Allow you to 'show not tell' potential visitors about the destination;
- Will lead to building something that people care about and want to buy into;
- Allow vendors, operators, and other organizations to easily access the area to ensure they are working collaboratively in telling the Tumbler Ridge story — online and offline;
- · Establish a common language that can be shared including brand identifiers (e.g. logo, tagline, hashtags); and
- · Indirectly sell the destination by triggering the desire to visit and motivate travellers to add their stories during and after their visit.



Opportunity #8: Set Achievable Targets

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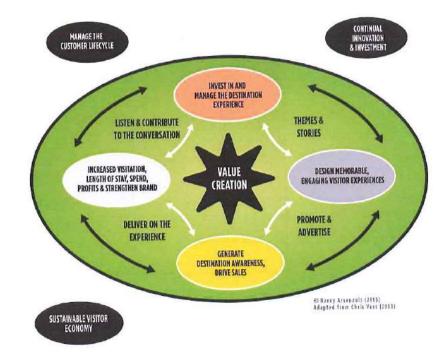
Sustainable growth has to come with a touch of realism relative to what can be achieved in the next three years with the new Global Geopark designation. This includes projects that can be started and completed (e.g. branding), those that may require progressive investment as resources become available (e.g. way-finding and signage), and those that will come as a result of steady, progressive investment in the Tourism Investment Cycle (e.g. increased visitation, length of stay and spend) (Figure 5).

Ensure your measures of success cover all categories that create value for visitors, businesses, and the community. Return on investment is critical, because if you only measures financial success, some of the broader benefits of tourism to a community are missed.

In Nunatsiavut for example, one tourism goal was to hire 100% local Inuit to deliver the tourism experience at their lconic Canadian Signature Experience 'Basecamp', (http://www.torngatbasecamp.com/home/about_base_camp.htm) which is a combined research and tourism gem in Torngats Mountains National Park.

In Halifax Nova Scotia, the 'Soldier for a Day' visitor experience offered by the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, which sells for \$199 per person, has garnered endless earned media and user generated content than any

Figure 5: Tourism Investment Cycle



marketing campaign could ever afford — these are all important measures of success. This is holistically and realistically achievable.

And at Destination British Columbia, they have embraced the Net Promoter Score⁹ as a key referral indicator that businesses and destinations are encouraged to consider. It asks a simple question: How likely is it that you would recommend [visiting town/business] to a friend or colleague?

⁹ Net Promoter Score: https://www.netpromoter.com/know/

Next Steps:

- Review this assessment to determine where the short-term opportunities are that can be actioned within the next six months and those that
 can prepare the community for the 2016 tourism high season (e.g. branding) and further ahead to the 150th Canada celebrations in 2017.
 Then identify those actions that will require a progressive investment in updating/replacing (e.g. trail brochures) combined with new
 investments that are needed (e.g. product/experience development and way finding).
- 2. Align the tourism investment opportunities with the economic development plan, funding partner opportunities, and private sector investment possibilities. This includes the measures for success, qualitative and quantitative.
- 3. Share the tourism development opportunities with key stakeholder groups who have worked so passionately on securing the Global Geopark designation so their interests and contributions can be factored into the path ahead, and their engagement and support secured.
- 4. Set forth a tourism action plan that identifies 1, 2, and 3 year targets, budgets, and revenues, and identifies the lead individuals and/or organizations to be the champion or catalyst for change.

